NEW SERIAL BY GEORGE MANVILLE FENN JUST STARTED.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 397. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 8TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

RISING SUN STOVE POLISH
EASIEST, QUICKEST, CHEAPEST, & BEST BLACKLEAD IN THE WORLD

Risin' Sun METAL POLISH
Gives a beautiful soft brilliant polish to all kinds of Metal.

1 GREAT BOONS

A sample of any one post free 2 stamps.
Name this publication
C. CHANCELLOR & CO.
London, E.C.

THREE 3

MACK'S DOUBLE STARCH
CONTAINS IN PROPER PROPORTIONS
GLOSS. BORAX. GUM. WAX. & &c.

MASON'S
EXTRACT OF HERBS
For the Immediate Production of
BOTANIC BEER.

A Nine-gallon Cask of Alcoholic Beer from a Brewery will cost you 10/6, but Eight Gallons of Beer made from

Mason's
EXTRACT of HERBS

Can be obtained for 6d., plus a pound or two of Sugar and a little Yeast.

THE
FINEST BEVERAGE
IN THE WORLD.

Inventors and Manufacturers:
Newball & Mason,
HYSON GREEN WORKS,
Nottingham.

If unable to obtain it in your neighbourhood, send 9 stamps for sample bottle; or samples of both Wine Essence and Extract of Herbs, post free for 15 stamps.

KIRBY BEARD & Co LIMITED
KIRBY BEARD & Co TRADE MARK
SPECIALITIES
PINS. NEEDLES Hair Pins
WORKS: BRADFORD ST BIRMINGHAM AND IPSLEY ST. REDDITCH ENGLAND
WAREHOUSES: 7 WATLING ST LONDON ENGLAND; 75 BOULEVARD SEBASTOPOL PARIS FRANCE; 364 & 365 BROADWAY NEW YORK U.S.A.

SEVEN PRIZE MEDALS.

C. BRANDAUER & Co's
CIRCULAR POINTED PENS

These series of pens neither scratch nor spurt. They glide over the roughest paper with the ease of a soft lead pencil. An assorted sample box for 7 stamps from the works, Birmingham.

Digitized by Google

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Rooms, next, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

"THE NIMBLE 9D."

Great Reduction in price to 9d. per lb. in order to reduce stock, but

QUALITY GOOD AS EVER.

NEARLY 100,000 BEDS ALREADY SOLD

TO THOROUGHLY SATISFIED PURCHASERS.

NEWHAM'S LINCOLNSHIRE FEATHER BEDS

THESE BEDS are warranted doubly purified, dusted, and perfected in our own extensive factory at Boston, Lincs., made in strong linen bordered tick. The quality, sweetness, and purity of every bed guaranteed. These beds ALWAYS GIVE SATISFACTION, and many thousands of purchasers have sent us flattering testimonials and other orders for beds. Note following prices, *which are 25 per cent. less than our recently advertised prices.*

No. 1—Single Bed, Bolster and Pillow, 6ft. 3in. by 3ft. 6in., weighing 40lb.	**30/-**
No. 2—Double Bed, Bolster, and Two Pillows, 6ft. 6in. by 4ft. 6in., weighing 50lb.	**37/6**
No. 3—Double Bed, Bolster, and Two Pillows, 6ft. 6in. by 4ft. 6in., weighing 55lb.	**41/3**
No. 4—Extra Size Bed, Bolster, and Two Pillows, 6ft. 6in. by 5ft., weighing 65lb.	**48/9**

Any sized Bed only 9d. per lb., *Carriage Paid*, to any station in the United Kingdom. FEATHERS ONLY **9d.** PER LB. The trade supplied. All orders must be accompanied by cheque or P.O.O. (which, as security to purchasers, may be post-dated ten days). Send for samples of Feathers and Ticks, Price Lists, etc., which will be sent *Post Free* and need not be returned. A great reduction on three or more Beds. *Please mention this paper.*

S. S. NEWHAM & CO., Boston, Lincolnshire.

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation,

Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion,

Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

ANNUAL SALE SIX MILLION BOXES.

In Boxes, 9½d., 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

TRILENE REGD TABLETS. THE ONLY CURE for STOUTNESS Registered by GOVERNMENT Price 2/6

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Readily **Reduce Weight** and **Cure Corpulency Permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to PRESERVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of diet. **Reduction begins immediately.**

An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

131, Victoria Street, London, S.W.—Mrs. ARTHUR WEGUELIN (the "Society" Celebrity) writes: "By simply taking the Trilene regularly, and without change of diet, I have lost 1st. 4lb. in 4 weeks."

Bretton West, near Wakefield.—"Miss L. LANGFIELD has taken a box of tablets, and is already 7lb. lighter."

Windsor Hotel, Merthyr Vale, South Wales.—Mr. J. THOMAS writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17st., and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.—Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

127, Out Gang Lane, Old Radford, Notts.—Miss E. P. PARSONS says: "I was 16st. before taking Tablets, and am now 11st.—going on nicely."

Send **2/6** to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

ONE BOX
OF
Dr. Mackenzie's Improved
Harmless Arsenic Complexion Wafers

will produce the most lovely complexion that the imagination could desire; clear, fresh, free from blotch, blemish, coarseness, redness, freckles, or pimples. Post free for 4/6.—**S. HARVEY,** 5, Denman St., London Bridge, S.E. Half-boxes 2/9. Use **Dr. MACKENZIE'S ARSENICAL TOILET SOAP.** 1s. per Tablet: No. 2, unscented, 6d. per Tablet. **Made from Purest Ingredients and Absolutely Harmless.**

Beware of the many imitations.
HAVE DR. MACKENZIE'S OR NONE.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

RED NOSES

Permanently cured in a few days by a simple, inexpensive self-treatment. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope to Dr. A. M. CURTIS, York Chambers, Adelphi, London, W.C.

S.S. S.S.
PEARSON'S
£100
COUPON.
No. 32
Aug. 8, 1896.
S.S. S.S.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A doctor's widow knows of a simple, inexpensive remedy that permanently destroys the roots, and will forward particulars free to all those afflicted sending stamped envelope. Address Mrs. B. D. WOOD, 4, DUKE STREET, VILLIERS STREET, LONDON, W.

BLUSHING

Permanently cured. A Pamphlet giving sound practical advice and particulars of a successful treatment for a rapid, simple, and inexpensive home cure, forwarded free to all upon receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. B. L. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

TOO THIN IN THE BUST.

Ladies desiring any improvement in this direction should send me stamped addressed envelope for free particulars of a simple, inexpensive, and harmless self-treatment, whereby a perfect figure, with full natural bust, can be obtained. Address, in confidence, Mrs. B. K. NORRIS, 7, Addington Crescent, York Road, London, S.E.

HEADACHES, NEURALGIA, RHEUMATISM

CURED SPEEDILY with **EVENIA CACHETS** (Regd.). A Safe and Certain Remedy. Send 1/3 to-day for a box, post free. D. D. BUCHAN, Frieckheim, N.B.

London Agents: **F. NEWBURY & SONS, 1, King Edward Street, E.C.**

HIGH-CLASS TAILORING

Every garment cut to measure.
DIRECT from the Manufacturer, saving all Middle Profits.

MEN'S SUITS, 18/6
Better Qualities, 22/6, 25/6, 31/6, 37/6, 45/-, 52/6, 63/-.

CYCLING SUITS
From 15/-.
Value Unequalled.
Fit Guaranteed.

BOYS' SUITS
Pieces for Mending sent with all Suits.

LADIES' TAILOR-MADE COSTUMES
From **10/6** to **70/-**
See our New Patterns before ordering.
It will pay you to do so.
(Hundreds to choose from), Post Free on Application.
All Goods Carriage Paid.

Factory Clothing Company,
Manufacturing and Ladies' Tailors,
117K, ALBION ST., LEEDS.

BANK HOLIDAY NUMBER of SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON

LOVE ROMANCE ADVENTURE WAR HUMOUR & PATHOS

No. 397.] For the Week ending Aug. 8th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

ALONE ON THE SEA.

How José Andres Claimed the Life he had Saved.

AMONG the smiling villages and hamlets which border the Cantabrian coast is one little seaport town, gay and charming, whose sands and shore have made it a summer resort for the richest and most luxurious of those Spanish families who hasten with every recurring season to take refuge at some favourite watering-place from the vernal heats of the great cities.

Among the many tales, now grave now gay, which the fisher-folk love to relate to the gentry who come to sojourn amid them, not the least popular is the history of José Andres Villalba, whose fame yet lives in enthusiastic regret in the hearts of his fellow townsmen. He was a gallant fellow, a model of manly beauty, so says the recollection of those who have embalmed his memory—tall, slender, supple, with the satiny black hair and the clear, olive skin of the ideal type of Spanish beauty.

But what excited most candid wonder, and most trenchant comment among his class, was the insensibility

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

of José Andres towards the charms of women. In vain the fisher-girls came running down to greet the coming of his boat, as they hailed the arrival of the others, chattering like magpies, their black hair streaming in thick plaits across their coral-red bodices, their gay-striped petticoats fluttering about their rounded knees. If José Andres showed his white teeth in a brief smile at their sallies, it was much to boast.

Save during the *temporada* (the bathing season), work was scarce and wages scant at the village; even the fish industry was declining for want of an adequate market. He felt a daily increasing need of larger earnings, and so, one summer when the season was at hand in which the old blood of Spain took wing for this modest village, as their prototypes of Germany and France for Biarritz and Baden-Baden, it occurred to José Andres to apply for "papers" to serve as *bañero* (bathing or swimming master).

One morning, when the blue waters seemed actually to leap and dance about the sportive band of doves which were the charge of José Andres, their number was augmented by the arrival of one about whom all the rest, maids and matrons, quickly gathered, with an affectionate warmth of reception which proved how little of jealousy or resentment they felt towards her for her exceeding beauty, which outshone theirs as the full blaze of the sun deadens moonlight.

She was no longer youthful. Thirty years must have brooded over her, but they had only perfected and completed her attractiveness. Tall, slender, dark, and pale, with black flashing eyes, her lovely face showed spirit, fire, and passion, such as might have been the gifts of Venus Aphrodite, when she sprang from the sea-foam.

When José Andres faced that splendid beauty, he felt that the spell of his fate was upon him. He grew pallid and tremulous, and when his hand, tanned and calloused by the oars, touched the silken, aristocratic palm of the lady, to lead her into the sea, he closed his eyes to give himself up the more to the delight of the moment, such as he had never expected to enjoy.

That was the beginning. From one day to another, the bathing master's passion grew more and more intense for this great worldly lady, who was to him the embodiment of all that he had dreamed of and longed for—the sublimation of the charms and graces of all the other women whose mere presence had intoxicated him. But she never dreamt of the youth's infatuation—she was so far above and beyond the little vanities and coquetries of the others. She, at least, could not stoop to accept, even had she known it, to tolerate, the adulation of a hireling, a menial of her service.

But for José Andres there was now no longer work—no father nor mother, no world, no space, no time—only the two divisions of time, when he saw, or saw not, his divinity. And the hours when she bathed in the sea seemed to him less than so many minutes.

There came a day which long should be of dismal memory and melancholy regrets in the history of that seaport village. The sands were covered with bathers. Seldom, indeed, they gathered there in such numbers. Suddenly the waters shivered, whirled, and eddied, circling in foamy whirlpools, and then retreating for a space, and then uplifting themselves as if with intelligent malevolence, they hurled themselves upon the beaches.

There was a hell upon earth. The gay and merry dawdlers, horror-stricken, struck down in the midst of their joyousness, acted each according to the individual's nature; some shrieked and then stood gazing stupidly upon their doom; some fell swooning; some turned and fled for their own salvation; some set their teeth, drew hard the breath, and turned to perish with helpless loved ones.

Bathing masters battled nobly in conjunction with the few who kept their self-possession; but when the tidal wave had spent its force, and the mighty pendulum swings of it in their diminishment had become dangerless, few were they of all the gay throng, so lately gathered there who were left among the living.

When the first shock of impulse reached them, José Andres was with the woman for whom he felt so mad an infatuation, so far out beyond the breakers that the shoreward rush of waters left them short of the land, and the retreating movement swept them again seaward. Instead of struggling towards the beach, the young man struck out with mighty strokes towards the wide waste of water, as if he were aiming for mid-ocean.

The undertow now caught them and now set them free; drift and tangle of weeds and buffeted human corpses were dashed around them in menace, but when at last the commotion subsided, they two were floating, still together, beaten, spent, exhausted, but alive and quite uninjured. Then failed her, womanlike, the noble courage of the woman, who had until now ably seconded with her splendid physical powers and her valiant self-possession every effort of her guide, her servant-protector. But now that the danger was virtually over her forces deserted her ignobly.

She threw up her hands and covered her eyes.

"Oh, heavens!" she cried, "can it be that I must die? No, no! I am too young to die yet!"

"These also were young—and lovely!" responded José Andres, indicating the floating corpses, "and now—only see them!" he strained her convulsively in his arms. "Is your life, then, so dear to you?"

"So dear! so dear! What would not I give for it?"

"Will you chose to live then?" demanded the man, devouring her with his flaming eyes.

"Oh, yes, yes! but save me, José Andres, and my gratitude will be eternal!"

"And do you know what will be the price of your safety? for I can save you; yes, believe me. What to me is this stretch of water? I could swim it yet, and carry you, three times over!"

"The price! I will give you what you will! but save me! save me!" sobbed the poor lady.

"Then I will," cried José Andres, "that you shall love me!" The madman pressed his fiery lips upon that proud, delicate face.

The woman screamed with terror, and struggled to free herself from the burning arms which held her with herculean power, while the bathing master murmured in her ear, wild, incoherent words of passionate vehemence.

"Andres, have mercy!" cried the unhappy woman, fixing upon him her starting eyes; "I will make you richer——"

"Make me rich?" cried José Andres; "you would offer me money? Know, then, that souls like mine care nothing for vile money! It is your love that I would—that I must—have, señora. I love you!—love you madly! Parents, home, life—all are lost to my eyes. You fill the world with your beauty, and you have made me the most wretched of men. Decide! Will you die, or will you love me?"

The lady looked once more across the water. Did she remember that one there loved her well enough to forgive her a sin as the price of her preservation?

Digitized by Google

"You shall have your will," she murmured, "but—you must take me ashore, I am near to dying!"

José Andres dragged her weak form across his shoulder and turned towards land, cleaving with giant strokes the restless water that seemed to part before him and own him master.

As they came near enough to the shore to hear the wails and lamentations of the few survivors, he paused again, and said sternly: "A pledge! You must give me a pledge of good faith! The chain round your neck! What, you will not? *You must!* and swear upon it that you will keep your word to me!"

She took from her neck the golden chain, and hung it about the throat of the man who sustained her.

"I swear!" she murmured faintly.

José Andres uttered a cry of joy, and once more sped onward and plunged with her through the breakers. He would give her over to none, but carried her, almost lifeless, to the dwelling of her people.

Andres bore away the golden chain, which he kissed frantically at every other step. If he remembered the gulf between himself and the daughter of one of the first families in the realm, the madness of his daring passion blinded him to its width and its importance.

The next morning the little town found time, in the midst of its grief and excitement, to wonder over the departure, late the night before, of the noble lady who had been miraculously preserved from drowning. So great was the shock, it was said, which she had received, that she could not bear to remain on the scene of her great peril, but had so strenuously urged her family to remove her that they had consented, fearing disastrous consequences to her health from a refusal.

A year passed by, and another, and the village was solitary and abandoned by its old friends; its beaches deserted, and its villas empty; so sinister a remembrance had cast an anathema over the waters. But everything yields to time; so that tragic history was forgotten little by little, and when twelve years had rolled round, the little port had returned to the joyousness and fullness of its best days, and was the theatre of reunion of the flower and cream of three aristocracies.

One evening, smiling as almost always are summer evenings by the sea, there came to the favourite beach of the bathers, a cavalier and a lady. The gentleman looked about for a bathing master to whom to confide the lady, but none was disengaged at the moment. Presently approached them a man whose gait was light and whose limbs were nervous, notwithstanding his white hair and wrinkled countenance, as of one very aged. He humbly begged that he might be allowed to take the lady into the water.

"What! are you a bathing master?" demanded the new arrival, wondering to see one of that calling at that place in such unfortunate plight.

"Ah! yes, my lord! and none will dispute my ability to battle with the waves that have known me for such long years!"

There was such accent of truth and sincerity in the words of the man that the cavalier intrusted the lady to him with the utmost confidence.

She, although beyond the fortieth birthday, was still so beautiful as to need fear no comparison with younger rivals. The bathing master led her into the water, so gently, so slowly, that when she at last cast a look around to take her bearings, she saw that they were far beyond the other bathers.

"Look at me, woman!" suddenly exclaimed her guide, clasping her in his sinewy arms, and fixing upon her his brilliant eyes, which gleamed like coals in their sockets; "look at me! Does nothing in these waves which rock us remind you of other days?"

"Oh, heavens! it is José Andres!" replied the lady, but half convinced, and still endeavouring to trace in those worn and aged features, the bold, audacious lineaments of the young fisherman.

"Yes, it is José Andres! he the poor victim of your black, disloyal treachery; your love has been for me an abyss that has swallowed up everything—home, friends, parents, youth, hope, life itself!—all devoured by your love! I saw Heaven open before my eyes when in a supreme moment you swore to be mine for ever, and the dark pit opened beneath my feet when you left me, committing the blackest perjury. Woman, woman! you did not know, or you would not understand, my love, nor how my heart adored you with all its force—with delirium, with frenzy! I have tried with all the force of my will to forget you, and the struggle has only resulted in destroying the best part of my life, and in leading me to premature old age."

"Andres!" the lady murmured, terrified, "I shall always remember the generosity of him who saved me!"

"But that is a chimera! the years cannot return. The man to whom you have belonged—oh, he has at least been happy, while the hapless José Andres has been consumed by one sole idea. Oh, that man—that man is happy; he was rich, and he could obtain the hand of her whom I worshipped. But I, who have sacrificed everything for her—I, who was swallowed up in the waters with her—I, who saved her, and who, in return, despising reward, and only asking that she should love me—what is left me? Her ingratitude, her treachery, her——" His voice chokéd in his throat and he could not continue; but he pressed her convulsively to his heart and frantically kissed her perfumed tresses.

"But you will forgive me?" intreated the lady, encouraged by the thought of the strength of the love that had survived so many years, so many changes.

"Will I pardon you? Yes! oh! your beauty causes in my heart a fatal vertigo, that awakens in me again the wish to possess you for ever—to unite you to me for that endless eternity whose secret is known to God, and to him only!" And José Andres, trembling, palpitant, re-living in that moment all his life of deprivations, clasped in his arms the neck of his beautiful companion, murmuring in her ear sweet words of love that the breezes bore away on their wings, to whisper to the seaweeds of the shore.

The unhappy woman, struggling in vain to free herself from the arms that clasped her, turned a last look towards the beach, most sorrowful, most despairing, and saw, arising above the blue shadows of the twilight, the gay little town with its white walls, and its chestnut groves, where the winds went, sighing, to blend with the sighs of lovers. Never is life so dear as when one's hold on it is loosened. Never seem so beautiful such scenes as when they are about to be blotted out for ever.

Pale, stunned, the unhappy wife struggled faintly yet a few moments longer, with the instinct of self-preservation; then her head drooped upon the breast of the man who blessed the fate of dying with her in his arms, as he held her beneath the water. He gazed upon her for a few minutes, and then gave himself up to the force of the waves; a few bubbles sprang to the surface, and it seemed as if one prolonged sigh was breathed forth, saluting the pale moon as she rose above the water.

Y. H. Addis.

Digitized by Google

The Crystal Magnet.

"What is this 'odic force' we hear so much about?" I said, looking up from the paper.

"Odic force," said Grimsby—Grimsby is one of those men who know everything—"odic force is one of those serviceable and comprehensive terms for which we are indebted to modern science, as it embraces, under one simple head, all the phenomena which used to be separately classed under such heads as electro-biology, animal magnetism, mesmerism, trance, etc.—in fact, it is one of those nine days' wonders which will soon make room for something else."

"Still," I suggested, "the present day, at least, is not lacking in liberality of idea, or breadth of view. I, for one, hope, within the scope of the coming generation, to witness many of the occult phenomena of Nature laid bare, reduced to law, and made to subserve the exigencies of everyday life."

"By-the-way," interrupted Grimsby, as if struck by a sudden idea, "did I ever tell you—it has just come to my mind now—of that experience with Count Kolnaky? It is a case in point—or rather you can take it as such or not, as you like. At any rate, it was a very curious coincidence, and, if you are all agreeable, I will tell it you.'

As Grimsby usually monopolises the conversation, in any case, when he is of the company, it did not matter very much to us what he talked about, and accordingly taking our silence for consent, he settled himself into an easy attitude, and told the following story:

"I do not know whether you remember, about a year ago, the advent of a certain Hungarian count or noble—at all events, he went by the name of a count—Count Kolnaky, we called him. He had been making the tour of the world, like most gentlemen of leisure of the present day, and, of course, passed through London. That he was immediately seized upon, introduced to the best society, and made a lion of, goes without saying. His full, black beard, and aristocratic bearing, were features of the most refined drawing-rooms of the West-end during his stay. And Count Kolnaky had many claims to social recognition. He possessed attractions which made him welcome wherever he went. He was a philosopher, a gentleman, and a brilliant conversationalist, all in one. I happened to meet him one evening at the Wyatts', and struck up an acquaintance with him, which lasted during his sojourn here.

"I recollect that evening, in the drawing-room, he became the centre of an attentive circle of scientific men and admiring ladies; for the Wyatts, as you know, are people of tact, and had chosen their company to suit their guest. I forget how it occurred, but the conversation somehow drifted, after having run the gamut through astronomy, optics, and electricity, to a discussion of the properties of the 'odic force.'

"My knowledge of the odic force was extremely limited, as was also the case with most of the company present, and we listened with much interest to what the Count had to tell us about it; and it was a subject he was well qualified to speak about, having been a personal friend of the Baron von Reichenbach, the discoverer of this mysterious principle in Nature. What? You are not very clear yourselves as to the properties of the odic force? Very well, I will begin by giving you a general idea about this mysterious and occult element, or principle—for no one yet really knows which or what it is.

"Some thirty or forty years ago, in 1845, I think, an Austrian nobleman, Baron von Reichenbach by name, in the course of some experiments he was making—he was a man of large means, and a scientific investigator by nature—discovered the existence of a new force, or principle, which he called 'od,' or 'odyl,' or 'odylic force.' Having ample means to indulge his tastes, he instituted in his spacious castle, near Vienna, a series of experiments for the purpose of thoroughly investigating the nature of the principle he had stumbled upon by chance.

"This principle involved, in general terms, the relations existing between animated beings and inanimate things. He demonstrated, to his own satisfaction, that such relations did actually exist—relations of sympathy or antipathy, if we may use these terms—between certain persons whom he styled 'sensitives,' and certain substances, such as crystal, and some of the metals. Thus, when one of his 'sensitives' was introduced into a dark room which contained an oblong block of crystal, luminous smoke or vapour appeared to emanate from one end of the block; and if the sensitive approached it, its presence was made manifest by a distinct sensation of cold.

"All beings, urged the Baron, are more or less sensitive to the contact or approach of some susbtance or other. Some cannot bear the sight of certain animals, or are strangely affected by certain sounds or noises. I myself, for instance, cannot bear the touch of velvet, or the sound made by drawing the nail over the surface of crape. In short, each and every one of us, who is in the least degree 'sensitive,' has his affinity, and his pet aversion, in some form or other.

Digitized by Google

"Reichenbach's theory met with determined opposition and ridicule by many scientific authorities, notably the late Dr. Carpenter, the distinguished physicist; but, on the other hand, it enlisted the support of many *savants* of almost equal eminence. But I do not mean to deliver a lecture on the subject just now; so, hoping I have given you a glimpse of the inner mysteries of odylism, I will proceed with my story.

"Well, Count Kolnaky, as I said, was the centre of an admiring and intellectual coterie, all standing in the middle of the drawing-room, and the scientific discussion went bravely on for a considerable time. But even the charms of science will not serve to keep an evening party, if it contains a leaven of youth in its composition, in perfect accord, and, one by one, the ladies were observed to detach themselves from the group, sounds of more or less levity were heard from distant corners, and presently none but a few old professors and intellectual fogies surrounded and metaphorically buttonholed the Count.

"Presently Mrs. Wyatt, a charming woman, as you may know—as clever as she is pretty, and always on the look-out to amuse her guests, drew out from a little knot of ladies, who had evidently been concocting some plot or other at one of the doors of the conservatory, and made straight for the gathering in the centre of the room. Approaching Count Kolnaky, she said, at the same time making a pretty little mock obeisance:

The centre of an admiring and intellectual coterie.

"'I am commissioned, a deputation of one, to bear to your countship the ultimatum of the ladies present. It is that you will stop talking, and proceed to action. In fine, we desire you to give us an object lesson in this "odic force," that you have been so learnedly expatiating upon for the last half-hour. Is not that the message I was to deliver, ladies?' concluded our hostess, turning to her fair guests, who had followed to give moral support and backing to their spokeswoman.

"Then followed a medley of voices, from among which one could distinguish such expressions as: 'Yes, *do*, Count;' 'It will be *so* nice!' 'Oh, you *must*, now!' '*Please* oblige us!' 'I am *sure* you will;' with others of like tenor, during which the count, who, by-the-way, like most of his countrymen, speaks capital English, disengaged himself from his scientific *entourage*, and smilingly professed himself delighted to promote in any way he could the enjoyment of the evening.

"'I shall be most happy,' he said, 'to conduct an experiment with a view of demonstrating the existence and potency of the "odic force," provided I can find a subject sufficiently "sensitive" to practise upon. I see no reason why, in an intellectual assemblage like this,' with a comprehensive bow to the company, which numbered some twenty persons, 'I should not do so. Permit me to make a tour of the *salon* that I may inspect;' and the Count proceeded to pass leisurely to and fro, beaming good-naturedly through his spectacles, first at one, then at another, and imperturbably running the gauntlet of the masculine smiles and feminine titters which met him on every side. He did not, however, seem to be very favourably impressed with the adaptibility of any of us to become exponents of the mystery of the 'odic force,' for, after completing his round, he paused near the folding-doors, rubbed his chin reflectively, and was silent.

"The sound of the turning of a leaf in the book in the other drawing-room—we were a small party, and until then I thought we had all collected in the larger of the apartments—attracted his attention. He turned, looked in, and then walked in the direction whence the sound proceeded. All of us followed, as there was no one who had not now become interested in the proceedings of the Count. Seated at a table, reading, was a gentleman whom all of you know, at least, by sight, as he is quite a prominent member of the legal profession, and may be seen every day at the courts. As what afterwards transpired in this connection might possibly exert an injurious influence upon this gentleman's reputation and practice, and as I am convinced that he is a thoroughly estimable and honourable man, I shall, if you please, call him Copeland.

"Mr. Copeland looked up as we approached the table, surprise depicted in his frank blue eyes, and then rose as it struck me, to apologise for having withdrawn from the party. Count Kolnaky, however, anticipated him by remarking, in an easy manner:

"'Forgive our intrusion, my dear sir. I had the pleasure of an introduction to you, if I remember right, before dinner—Mr Copeland, I believe. We have had

Digitized by Google

quite an interesting talk in the other room, since dinner, as to the merits of the "odic force," and our lady friends here have pressed me to make a practical exposition of it, if I can. It has just struck me that your organisation is of just such a kind as to be sensitive to this force. The question is, are you willing to contribute to the instruction and entertainment of this company by permitting me to ascertain whether it is so or not?'

The Count sat down and penned a brief note.

"Mr. Copeland, who is a tall, fair-haired, intellectual-looking man of about five-and-thirty, smiled, said he had heard and read something about the mysterious force Count Kolnaky referred to, was interested and desirous of further information regarding it, and should be delighted if he could be of any service in elucidating its mysteries for the benefit of Mrs. Wyatt's guests.

"The Count bowed and thanked him, then after consulting his watch, turned to Mrs. Wyatt and said:

"'I must trouble you, dear madam, to let me have someone to carry a message to my servant at the Palace Hotel. Had I anticipated that I should be called upon to experiment with the "odic force" to-night, I should have come prepared. As it is, I must send for my crystal.'

"The Count sat down and penned a brief note, which he handed to the messenger, who had meanwhile been summoned. During the half-hour which elapsed between the departure and return of the messenger, and which was spent in desultory conversation, I noticed that Count Kolnaky engrossed the undivided attention of Mr. Copeland, with whom he talked in low and earnest tones. I thought I remarked, too, during this time, a dreamy expression stealing now and again over the lawyer's face, as if he had become oblivious to his surroundings. At length the messenger returned with a small parcel, which he handed to the Count, and which being unwrapped was found to contain an oblong section of clear rock-crystal, some eight inches in length by two in width, the polyhedron being almost as regular in shape as if cut from glass. The Count then asked Mrs. Wyatt for some silk thread, and while it was being procured for him he asked Copeland to take hold of one end of the crystal while he held the other. The two men sat facing each other for about five minutes without speaking. At length Copeland began to manifest signs of uneasiness.

"'Do you experience any strange sensation, Mr. Copeland?' asked the Count, in evidence to the state of his *vis-à-vis*.

"'The crystal feels like a lump of ice,' replied the latter. 'It has been growing colder and colder ever since we began holding it.'

"'Good!' exclaimed the Count approvingly. Then, turning to us, he said: 'Ladies and gentlemen, it is as I expected. Our friend, Mr. Copeland, is a "sensitive." I think I can with his assistance, make some demonstrations of the actuality and potency of the "odic force." Mr. Copeland, the touch of the crystal pains you; you can now let it go.'

"Copeland did so, apparently nothing loth. The Count transferred the crystal to his left hand, and then proceeded to make some preparations. He first lifted one of the chairs and set it down near the wall of the room opposite the conservatory, and facing the side with the folding doors. He then asked Copeland to take his seat in that chair, and next asked us all to accompany him into the other apartment, leaving Copeland alone in the smaller drawing-room. He then pointed out to us that, from the position Copeland occupied, all the interior of the larger drawing-room was invisible to him, accept a certain angle. In this angle he requested us to station ourselves.

"He next unwound a long silk thread from its reel, tied one end round the centre of the oblong crystal polyhedron, and getting upon a chair, attached the other end to one of the branches of the chandelier which hung in the centre of the room, gauging the length of the thread so that the crystal, when it swung free, would be on about a level with his head. From the point at which the crystal hung it was impossible to see Copeland, accordingly it was equally impossible for Copeland to see the crystal, the wall between the

"I want two gentlemen to stand near me."

Digitized by Google

drawing-room blocking the field of vision between these two points; while from the angle occupied by Mrs. Wyatt's guests there was free and uninterrupted vision of both Copeland and the crystal, it being possible to observe both simultaneously, so to speak.

"'I want two gentlemen to stand near me,' now said the Count, 'so that they can minutely observe my actions and hear my whispers, and at the same time have a full view of Mr Copeland.'

"I was first to volunteer, as I happened to be standing close by the Count at the moment, and was also anxious to lose no detail of this interesting experiment. I have always been fascinated by the occult and marvellous. The place next me was almost simultaneously taken by a tall, dark, somewhat sinister-looking figure, that of a gentleman to whom I had been introduced that evening, and whom, for reasons which will afterwards appear, I prefer to call Mr. Daintry. This gentleman had, I noticed, been taking peculiar interest in the proceedings and was evidently well acquainted with Copeland, as I had seen the two conversing very earnestly before dinner, though, as I thought, in rather a disputatious than an amicable mood, and with a somewhat abrupt finish on the part of the lawyer.

"'Now,' said the Count, addressing the party in general, "you see how this crystal hangs. Its longitudinal axis points straight to where Mr. Copeland is sitting, like a needle to the pole. What is the reason of that? Simply, that during the few minutes Mr Copeland and myself were engaged in holding the crystal, a sympathetic relation was established between us, through the intermediary agent of the crystal. One peculiarity of this relation is that the crystal, or rather the "odic force," which passes through it, and emanates from it, acts as a conductor between our respective intelligences. By means of this mysterious force, messages are conveyed from the one intelligence to the other, with as much facility and certainty as if they were transmitted along substantial wires, by the electric fluid, in the ordinary manner.

"The Count then went through a variety of motions, such as taking out his watch and looking at it, yawning, scratching his head, and so forth, all of which were simultaneously imitated by Copeland with such absolute precision of gesture as to excite the greatest enthusiasm and merriment among the ladies, and engage the keenest attention from the *savants* behind them, all having of course, a clear view of both the actors in this odylic drama.

"'That is the simplest form of mental intercommunication provided by this odic current,' explained the Count, when, after a minute or two, the mimicry seemed to grow monotonous. 'A much higher order will be developed in my experiment.'

"As he spoke, he reached at random for a book from a table near him. He opened the leaves casually, about the middle, and I noticed that it was an edition of Moore's poems. He fixed his eye steadily upon a page—in the 'Fire Worshippers,' I think—and said:

"'Our friend, Mr. Copeland, will now favour us with a little recitation.'

"No sooner said than done. In a full, sonorous voice, with appropriate inflection, Copeland proceeded to declaim line after line of the page at which Count Kolnaky was looking, beginning, oddly enough, in the middle of a clause, as the page did. When he had rolled off some twenty lines, the Count gently closed the volume, and the declamation ceased. The ladies were in raptures; the scientific gentlemen looked sheepish and bewildered.

"'Pardon me,' said a voice at my shoulder, 'one moment, Count Kolnaky, before we stop these interesting experiments. I am sure a minute or two, more or less, will not matter to my friend, Mr. Copeland, and he would be the last to object, did he know it was in the cause of science.'

"I turned, and recognised the sinister-looking gentleman, who had stood with me, next to the Count, during the proceedings, who had taken the greatest interest in all, more especially the last experiment, and whom I have, for the nonce, called Daintry. If I described him fully, you would all know him, and, taking everything into consideration, there is just as much reason for preserving his incognito as that of Copeland, as no good could be effected by exposing him, and a possible injustice might, and in the opinion of the world at large certainly would, be done.

Mr. Daintry.

"'What I wanted to know is simply this,' went on Daintry, in suave accents, 'could anyone else—could I, for instance—carrying on the mental intercourse with my friend Copeland, in the same way you have done through this bit of crystal? I am asking the question purely in the interest of science, you know.'

"I was somewhat amazed, knowing, as I did, Daintry's reputation, to hear him talking about the 'interests of science,' and inwardly wondered what there could be in the experiments we had just witnessed to excite such lively interest in one whose tastes were certainly not noted for elevation of character, and whose science did not soar, so far as I was aware, beyond the billiard table or the pigeon trap.

"The Count, however, answered him with gravity and politeness:

"'You are asking a very hard question, my dear sir,' he replied, 'and one, which, I am free to confess, I cannot answer. Everything depends upon the sympathy or *rapport* existing between the parties communicating. The odic force is, indeed, constantly emanating from that crystal. The question is, can that force be so controlled by you, or another, as to affect Mr. Copeland in the manner we have just witnessed? In my case a mutual *rapport* was established, by our together holding the crystal for some time before I began my experiments. It may be that you can establish communication, without resorting to that method of doing it. I know that enough of Mr. Copeland's magnetic, or, rather, odic *aura* will cling about that crystal for several days to come, to enable me to hold communication with him.'

"'Will you allow me, Count, to try whether I can influence my friend Copeland?' in a curious voice.

"'Certainly,' acquiesced the Count, 'unless the ladies are tired by this time?'

"The ladies, however, disclaimed any such feeling, and Daintry proceeded to apply his hand to the crystal as he had seen Count Kolnaky do.

Digitized by Google

"Copeland was sitting in the same easy attitude on his chair in the other room, and I kept my eyes on him, as I was as curious as anybody to witness the outcome of the experiment.

"About a minute passed without noticeable effort. In about a minute more, Copeland began to fidget upon his seat, as before. A few seconds afterwards he got up, lifted the chair he had been sitting on, and deliberately set it standing upon the drawing-room table.

"The action was so ludicrous and unexpected, that there was a general laugh, and much merriment among the ladies, during which Daintry explained that this was just what he had willed Copeland to do.

"After this, it was agreed by everyone that the existence and power of the odic force had been amply

Set it standing upon the drawing-room table.

demonstrated, and that it was time to release Copeland from his mystic thraldom, if, indeed, he was so enthralled, for it was certainly impossible to tell from his mere appearance that he was not in perfect possession of all his senses. And, so far as I am concerned, where Copeland crossed the division line from somnambulism, hypnotism, odylism, or whatever condition it was, will always remain a mystery; for, after he had set the chair upon the table, he turned, stopped for a moment, saw us laughing, realised, evidently abruptly, that there was something to laugh at, turned again, took in the incongruity of the chair perched upon the table, rubbed his eyes, looked again at us in a bewildered sort of way, and coming up to where we were standing, said he fancied he must have been dozing for a minute or two, under the pressure of Count Kolnaky's mysterious force, and asked us whether he was responsible for the misplaced furniture.

"The party soon after broke up, Count Kolnaky accepting a seat in Daintry's conveyance, which was waiting for him at the door, while I took the train, having first made an appointment to call upon the Count the next day for some further information about the odic force.

"Next morning, accordingly, I sent up my card to Count Kolnaky's rooms, at the Palace Hotel, a message being returned by his servant, requesting me to come up and wait, as the Count had left orders to that effect, in case he was out when I called; I did so, and was passing away the time till the Count's return by looking over some interesting books which were lying around, when the door opened, and the servant ushered in our friend, Mr. Daintry.

"We exchanged salutations, but our tastes having little in common, I returned to my reading, while Daintry sauntered here and there about the room, looking at things in general. I was not so deeply engaged in reading but that I was conscious of what was going on around me, and I noticed that, after a time, Daintry stopped before a little table and seemed to be examining some object that lay upon it. I saw that this object was nothing more or less than the crystal which had afforded us so much entertainment the night before. Daintry looked at it a considerable time. Then he took it up in his hand, walked over to one of the windows, and looked out. He seemed to me to be taking bearings. Then he held up the crystal in his hand, about the level of his breast, dipping it a little from the horizontal, till its other end pointed in a north-easterly direction.

"His actions had so much method in them, that I began to get interested, and determined to give them a more thorough inspection. I was sitting in the centre of the room, while Daintry was standing with his back to me, near the window; thus I had a good view of the position. The first thing I remarked was that a straight line produced through the long axis of the crystal would cross the City in about the direction of Chancery Lane. The next was that Daintry remained standing there motionless about five minutes, keeping the crystal pointed steadily in the same direction. Then his hand began to shake a little, but he kept it up for two or three minutes more, till it seemed to me that he could do so no longer; suddenly he hurriedly walked to the little table he had taken the crystal from, and dropped it like a hot potato.

"'Been experimenting a little with the odic force on your own account?' I remarked carelessly.

"Daintry coloured, and looked confused, but said nothing, and presently Count Kolnaky came in. The incident was forgotten, and passed out of my mind, till revived by a somewhat remarkable circumstance the other day.

"And this is what that remarkable circumstance was: About three weeks ago there died a rich old gentleman, whom I shall call Jelfe. Jelfe was Daintry's uncle, but did not take kindly to his nephew's peculiar ways. The old gentleman was reported to be worth about half a million, all of which would go to Daintry as next of kin, provided there was no will. But there was a will, and this will devised all the property to certain charities, with the exception of a small monthly income to the nephew. This will was drawn by Lawyer Copeland, attended by his confidential clerk, who is a personal friend of mine, and deposited along with other valuable papers in the safe of Mr. Copeland's office. When old Jelfe died, no will could be found. The safe was emptied, every drawer in the office was ransacked for the missing will, but it did not turn up, and, accordingly, the money went to Daintry.

"Of course a most minute inquiry was made by Copeland as to any circumstances which could throw any light upon the matter, and in the course of this inquiry

Digitized by Google

one of the junior clerks testified that he had seen through the open door, about a year before, his employer rise from the table at which he was seated in his private office, go to the safe, unlock it, take therefrom a paper, which looked like a will, go to the fireplace, place the paper in the empty grate—it was summer—and deliberately set fire to it, watching it burn till it was consumed.

He seemed to me to be taking bearings.

"He said nothing about it at the time, as he did not dare to question the acts of his employer. When asked if he could remember the day when the strange occurrence took place, he said he could, as he had bought a new suit of clothes the day before, and had made a note of the date, which was the 17th of May, and the time was about half-past twelve, as he recollected he had just returned from lunch.

"Now, the curious coincidence to which I want to call your attention is this: It was on the sixteenth of May that I attended the Wyatt's party, and accordingly it was the 17th of May that I was at Count Kolnaky's rooms at the Palace Hotel. It was also between the hours of twelve and one that I was there, and it must have been about half-past twelve when Daintry behaved so strangely with the crystal, or when at the time that Copeland burnt up that legal paper in the extraordinary manner related by the boy, an act, by-the-way, which he has no recollection of doing.

"Another strange point in the affair is, that a line drawn in the direction the crystal was pointing would just intersect Chancery Lane in the neighbourhood of Copeland's office.

"Now, the question is, whether these points are mere meaningless coincidences, or whether they bear a strange and momentuous relation to each other. Are we to believe that Daintry deliberately directed the odic force, the use of which he had learned the day before, so as to inspire Copeland with the purpose to burn his uncle's will? He had ascertained the day before that he certainly possessed the power to influence the lawyer to obey his will. What so natural that as he should exercise the power for his personal benefit? He had also learned from Count Kolnaky that the crystal would continue to exert its influence over Copeland for a time, possibly a day or two. What so natural, then, as that he should seek to prove its efficacy on the following day?

"I will not pretend to answer these questions, or to venture an opinion on this strange coincidence; but you can now see why I was anxious to conceal the real names of the parties implicated in the affair, as a public disclosure might injure the lawyer, and might also be doing an injustice to the nephew, who, after all, has only obtained what many persons thought should have been his in any case."

T. M.

THE ALL-ROUND HOUSEWIFE

must needs be a good cook, a well-dressed lady, with an artistic home, versed in the management of her family, chatty and up-to-date. **"HOME NOTES"** for the small sum of one penny will make a woman all these. It contains the best of information on all the leading subjects.

"WHAT CAN WE HAVE FOR DINNER?"

is a frequent question. Next time you have reason to ask it, purchase **"HOME COOKERY"** (one penny weekly). Therein you will find a week's dinners arranged for you, with recipes, to say nothing of articles on cookery of every description—household, invalid, juvenile, novel, high-class, and foreign.

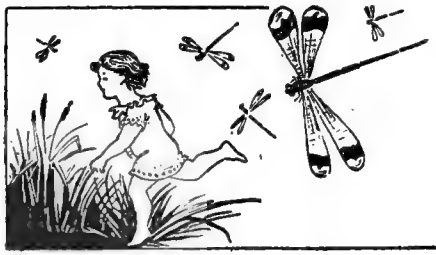
DRESSES FOR THE CHILDREN

can always be made at home with competent advice. You will find it in **"FASHIONS FOR CHILDREN,"** price 1½d. (post free 2½d.), to be had on the 15th of each month, together with the latest and most becoming designs for all ages, from the stage of "short clothes" to "long frocks."

WHEN THE SUMMER SALES WERE ON,

amongst your bargains you doubtless purchased some cheap light materials not worth sending to the dressmaker. Make them up yourself. Nothing easier if you invest 1½d. in **"DRESSMAKING AT HOME,"** published on the 1st of each month, and you will probably be so pleased with the result (having followed the detailed instructions set forth) that it is not unlikely you will do all your own dressmaking henceforth. By wearing a dress made after any of the designs given you cannot fail to look charming, yet you will not become a mere "fashion-plate."

Digitized by Google



Key of Jumble Story, No. 3 (see p. 185).

THE TRUSTED FRIEND.

"THE gloomy house at the end of the street is surrounded by a high wall, and a mystery," the Doctor of the suburb was fond of saying, and the epigram had made the place notorious.

There were few, however, who troubled themselves about the matter; those that did merely shook their heads as they went by and passed on. That there was a mystery, it was nevertheless very evident. So the busy-bodies discussed the matter, with the result that a watch was set on the house, and several facts of interest brought to light.

In the first place it was found that there was one young person in the house at least; and then it was noticed that she was usually alone, and, what is worse, was very pretty. And when she was scanned yet more closely, and her every detail, from her hat to her shoe, had been discussed, it was observed that behind the fresh beauty of her face there was a tired expression of sadness and worry: she must be very lonely, and yet the busy-bodies did not think of comforting her.

In truth there was a mystery behind the high walls of the gloomy house, and yet how deep a mystery, and how tragic, no one even suspected.

For the girl who took the lonely little walks by herself was a young wife, whose husband was something in the City. That meant that he would go away, and return at all times of the day; sometimes he would be absent for days at a time, and even weeks. Then he would come home worn out and fatigued, but invariably with a swollen banking account.

One day, after he had been home all the morning and afternoon, he had taken his hat when it grew dark, and bade her a more tender farewell than usual, he had made sweet promises to her, saying that when he returned they would leave their gloomy house, and perhaps would take a holiday abroad for a year or two. And then he would never leave her again, and they would be rich and happy.

So he went away, and his wife waited anxiously for his return. But the days passed by and he did not come; the days lengthened into weeks, and the weeks into months, and still she was left alone.

Then gradually she used up all the money he had left her; friendless and relationless, she knew of no one to whom she might apply for aid. She sold the furniture, piece by piece, until there was none left; all the fine old furniture worth fifty times the amount she got for it.

The jewels went, one by one, and after those her clothes. The wind was blowing cold now, and she had but one old dress with which to clothe herself. Lastly she parted with her wedding ring, and then she awaited the end.

And the husband of this poor woman, starving, and deserted, alone in the gloomy house—what was it that he was doing?

The mystery is soon explained—he was in prison.

"Fourteen years penal servitude." He had not dared to tell his wife. It would kill her. He knew that she would soon be in want of money. Oh, the bitter irony of it—the cursed, bitter irony. Within ten paces of her door lay hundreds upon hundreds of pounds of his ill-gotten wealth.

And he could not let her know. His hair turned white with the agony of the thought; his health broke down; the doctors knew that he had but a few months to live.

Now it happened that in the exercising yard this man met a companion in misery who was an old friend. Sentence by sentence, sometimes only one a day he told his secret when the warder's back was turned. In the garden, six yards from the pear tree, beneath a dandelion plant, lay buried his hidden treasure, half in notes, and half in gold, amounting to thousands of pounds; he did not know how many. The man was to dig it up, and keep the notes himself, and give the gold to the "little wife." He was to tell her that her husband was dead.

By the last day of his friend's confinement the wretched husband had told him everything, and demanded his solemn oath that he would do his commands faithfully. The man swore by everything sacred and unsacred that he would do so; the two men looked each other earnestly in the eyes, and then one of them was taken back to his cell, and a few hours later found himself free.

He set out immediately in search of the out-of-the-way suburb his friend had mentioned. He had no difficulty in finding the big gloomy house, surrounded by the high wall. It was apparently deserted. Not a soul was to be seen. Only a few sparrows hopped on the overgrown drives. He went to the back of the building, scaled the walls, found the pear tree, and the dandelion plant, and drove his pick savagely into the soil. The dandelion broke asunder, and yielded up its treasures. He came to a heavy iron box, and drawing it out, he prised it open. His heart gave a great bound of excitement as he found within everything that his poor friend had described. He put the notes hastily on one side, and gazed at the gold. "He was to keep the notes for himself, and give the gold to the little wife." His friends' words came back to him, and he remembered the oath that he had sworn. Then a thought from the Devil entered his mind;—there were only two people in the world that knew his secret; and one, though living, was dead.

The moon came out from behind a cloud, and shining on the golden metal transformed it into a thousand stars. The man ran his fingers through the coins, and listened to their music.

Then he looked nervously behind him, and put the notes back in the box, and the whole in the bag. He threw the soil in its place again, and raised the sack to his shoulders. Then he hurriedly left the garden.

Digitized by Google

THE GRAND LAMA'S TOOTHACHE

LOUD was the wailing. The Grand Lama had the toothache!

All Thibet was in mourning, and a special ten days' prayer was being offered up in every temple throughout the land. But somehow prayer did not seem efficacious, and His Divine Individuality's ailment grew worse each day.

Nourmahal, fairest of the fair, tried in vain to ease the troubles of her lord and master. She hung about his neck, and mingled her tears with his. For—it must be confessed with sorrow—the Grand Lama actually wept. The Venerable Vizier was stricken with horror at this sight. "Go," he screamed to an attendant bronze, "go and bear hither the golden vessel wherein the sacrificial oils are blended. One drop of those precious tears ought not to be lost."

The sacred bowl was brought, and the Vizier with trembling fingers held it under the very nose of his imperial master, so as to catch the scalding tears as they fell. Still Nourmahal, fairest of the fair, continued to mingle her tears with those of the Grand Lama. This disgusted the worthy Vizier, who was a stickler for etiquette.

"Will the brother-in-law of the moon pardon me if I make a suggestion?" he said at last.

"The demons catch thee," growled the suffering Lama. "Don't you see I am in no humour for suggestions? Say thy say, and get it over."

"I merely wished to point out," observed the Vizier, "that it is scarcely meet to see the tears of one, who, though beautiful, is yet but a common mortal, mingled with the tears of a Grand Lama. Hadn't your Divine Individuality better put Nourmahal aside for the present? or shall we procure another weeping bowl for the fairest of the fair?"

At this the beauteous Nourmahal waxed exceeding wroth, and buried her lovely head in the imperial bosom. "Oh, dear Grand Lama!" she wailed, "the old wretch wants to separate me from you."

"I assure you," began the Vizier—but he was rudely interrupted by his sovereign.

"Take that ridiculous bowl away," yelled his majesty, giving the offending vessel a kick with his royal foot which sent it flying over the heads of the courtiers and spilt all the precious tears it contained. Nourmahal was enchanted. "A myriad of thanks!" she exclaimed, kissing the Grand Lama upon the cheek.

But, alas for Nourmahal! She had pressed her ruby lips upon the wrong jaw! Unconsciously she had aggravated the imperial toothache!

The Grand Lama bounded from his throne, and, clutching his former favourite by the long black hair, sent her flying after the sacrificial bowl.

"To the dungeons with her!" he howled. "Let her be decapitated to-morrow!"

At this moment the poor Vizier reappeared. "Your Divine Individuality is quite right," he said. "The minx was far too forward."

It was an unlucky remark for the Vizier. "You are as bad as she!" shouted the enraged monarch. "Take him away, guards, and unless he can find me a cure for this devil-born toothache within twenty-four hours, bring me his head in that same golden basin he has dared to annoy me with."

Then the Vizier was marched off, and His Divine Individuality sank back upon his throne, and resumed his interrupted weeping.

With the earliest streak of dawn, upon the following morning, the Grand Lama arose. He had spent a horrible night. The physicians had burned fire before his mouth, and the priests had prayed for the healing of his throbbing jaws. But it was all to no purpose. He was worse than ever.

The Vizier was brought before the throne loaded with chains. He had made good use of his time, however, and had one of his suggestions to make in regard to the imperial toothache.

"Let your Divine Individuality make a proclamation," he said, "to the effect that if anyone cures your toothache he shall be given a mighty herd of sheep, and made Governor of the Northern Provinces; but that, if he fail in the attempt, a lingering death shall be his portion. I have said——"

Digitized by Google

The Grand Lama dried his tears, and, with one hand on his jaw, extended the other to the Vizier. "Take off his chains!" he said, "he is temporarily pardoned. We will see how his plan works. Meanwhile, make the proclamation, and leave me in peace!"

* * * * *

Arung, the handsome, was a shepherd of the mountains, and his father, old Zebe, had been a shepherd before him. All the maidens were in love with Arung, for he had a soul above ordinary shepherds. The tails of his sheep were more neatly plaited, and their horns more quaintly carved than were the sheep of any other mountaineer. But the love of the maidens was not returned by Arung. He sighed for beauties with noses less flat, and lips less thick. In point of fact, he was a very unconventional young shepherd.

Now it came to pass that old Zebe, Arung's sire, fell sick; and his sickness was a mysterious malady in his sole remaining tooth. It was painful in the extreme, and Arung felt sad to see his father suffer. So he sat him down to think out a remedy.

"If I have in my flock a tainted wether," he said, "what do I do? I remove him. Why shall I not do the same with the tooth of my sire? It will not kill him to remove his tooth; and, as all his other teeth have come out by themselves, there must surely be a way of getting out this one!"

It was a brilliant thought. Arung was more than unconventional; he was original! He tied his father to the earth with thongs of osier, and, taking two flints used by him for carving his sheep-horns, he extracted the offending molar.

For a long time the old man would not look upon or forgive his son, but presently, as the pain began to die away, he recognised the good which had been done him, and wept tears of joy upon Arung's manly shoulders.

At this moment the door of the shepherd's hut was thrown open, and a herald of the Grand Lama appeared.

"Hearken, shepherds!" cried the new-comer, "to the proclamation of his Divine Individuality!"

And then and there he read aloud the celebrated toothache proclamation, which the mind of the Vizier had conceived.

* * * * *

Nourmahal, the fairest of the fair, was being led

Sent it flying over the heads of the courtiers.

before the Grand Lama to say her last farewell before her execution. As she entered the great hall of the palace, a youth in the guise of a shepherd passed close by her shrinking form. He was a handsome youth and stalwart withal. The favourite, used to close-shaven and stoop-shouldered courtiers, gazed with admiration upon the young stranger. And was the shepherd regardless of the beautiful being who thus scrutinised him? Hardly, for the shepherd was none other than Arung, the son of Zebe, and Arung had long sighed to look upon true female loveliness.

In point of fact the two fell in love at first sight.

* * * * *

"You say you can cure me?" said the Grand Lama to Arung, the son of Zebe.

"Divine Individuality!—yes!" replied the venturous youth. "But to do so I must be alone with you, and you must be bound hand and foot. I also request that

Digitized by Google

the fair maiden shall be my portion instead of the promised governorship."

"Your demands are granted," said the Grand Lama. "You can take the girl; I will be very glad to get rid of her. And now, my subjects, leave me entirely alone with this youth. Young peasant, you can proceed with your cure. Recollect, torture and death are the rewards of failure!"

Arung set his teeth hard and thought of Nourmahal. "I remember," he murmured.

Arung as he pulled at the royal tooth. His trembling wrist did not do its work so well as in the case of his father's tooth, for then no hideous death stared Arung in the face. However, all this came to an end, and so did this first royal dentistry. Arung's natural pluck and the memory of Nourmahal, nerved his arm, and at last he pulled the Grand Lama's tooth clear from the detaining jaw. At the same moment he unwisely removed the gag, which he had placed inside the Grand Lama's teeth. The long-deferred yell at last burst

Pulled the Grand Lama's tooth clear from the detaining jaw.

The Grand Lama was bound hand and foot, and before the monarch could cry out, Arung had securely gagged his imperial master, placing the gag inside the divine gums. Then began the dangerous experiment. His majesty, the moment he felt the first twinges of tooth pulling, tried madly to burst his bonds. His imperial countenance was a horrible picture of strong rage and pain. If his mouth were but ungagged he would have uttered yells loud enough to bring every guard in the palace to the spot. But Arung's foresight had settled that!

It would be impossible to describe the fear of poor

forth, followed by another and another. The Lama had not as yet realised the situation. He still, in imagination, felt the awful grinding pains of tooth-pulling.

Instantly the hall was full of guards and courtiers, the Vizier and Nourmahal among the rest. One look was sufficient. They beheld their ruler bound upon the floor, his imperial lips flowing with his divine blood!

With one accord they rushed upon the young shepherd.

"Divine Individuality," cried the kneeling Vizier, "to what death shall we doom this man?"

Digitized by Google

"Roast him alive!" spluttered the half-suffocated Grand Lama.

* * * * *

The baleful fire burnt in the square of the temple. Pale and haggard, the victim—Arung, son of Zebe—was standing by the lambent flames. The Grand Vizier was making ready to give the signal for the holocaust.

But the signal never came!

A breathless maiden, with streaming robes, leapt into the crowd, waving over her dusky ringlets the sacred parchment which none but the Grand Lama might use. It was a message from the palace!

The Vizier stayed his signal, and stretched forth his hand for the parchment. The girl advanced and delivered it into his hand. And Arung saw that the bearer of the message was none other than Nourmahal, his beloved.

Then the Vizier cleared his throat, and read aloud:

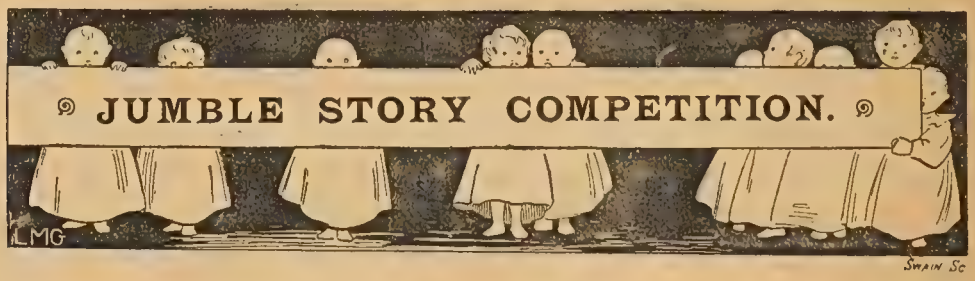
"To my worthy servant and Vizier, greeting—Thou hast been too hasty with the young peasant. For lo! I have recovered from the pain he occasioned unto me, and the racking toothache, sent by the demons, has entirely departed. Wherefore, let this youth go free. Conduct him before me, and I shall give him the reward which is his due."

The chains were thrown from Arung's limbs. He was free! Then, with shouting and beating of drums, he was led before the Grand Lama, who sat, with a white cloth tied about his jaw, on his throne of cedar-wood and gold.

"Arung, son of Zebe," said His Divine Individuality, "thou hast fulfilled all that thou didst promise. Therefore, I proclaim thee governor of my northern provinces, and command my Viziers to bestow upon thee great wealth of flocks and gold. Also I give unto thee my former favourite, Nourmahal, the fairest of the fair. I have been long thinking of getting another favourite, and this will be an amazingly good opportunity. I have spoken."

And so Arung, the son of Zebe, became a very great man, and was the father of all the tooth-pullers from that day even unto this. Ever afterwards he could, metaphorically, wind the Grand Lama round his finger.

George Perdos.



No. 6.

Six Prizes, one of £5 and five of £1 each, are offered to the competitors who most nearly put together the lines of the story appearing on the opposite page in their original order. Each line is complete in itself, and the first line is in its correct position, but the title is jumbled up.

Cut out the lines separately, and paste them up in what you consider to be their correct, readable order on one side of the paper, and send the story in an envelope marked "Jumbled Story," to *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

All competitions to be in by Monday, August 10th.

JUMBLED STORY NO. 6.]

THE FACT OF AN OLD MEEPOREGO VOW.

"OUR love is perfect, if ever love was," the man of our gurgling stream went splashing down at the foot of the black shoes and stockings which tried so hard to whistled to each other in the trees, while the swallows whispered sweet words to each other, and talked of the magnificent dress which a woman, who was standing behind her, she went hastily down the steps, and hailing their dingy lodgings early in the morning, and walking down from a cloudless sky, as they left the little way-side shabby coat.

The world seemed very happy that day. The sun was restrained himself, and then the girl, in all her finery, drove to an hotel, and it was not until she sank down in champagne, and with this they each pledged the health three days later.

And now their last day together had come. They left an easy chair, after having finished a sumptuous lunch, and unstrapping the small luncheon basket that they never love a man like that. How rugged looking he was!" Here she ordered an extravagant outfit. After that she pulled at the rake, while the regular "click" of the station, and went to the fields. They walked on the newly-cut, sun-browned hay. They turned it over with their feet, "but it is not the same man. My boy was tall and pale, and every now and again the tears sprang into the carriage.

Looking up the streamers, she found that there was the sweet-scented meadows. Then, when they grew five years I have yearned for this time. Sleeping and tired, they turned aside into a wooded, green-grassed flush on her cheeks, and tears in her eyes as she gazed down on the worn-out little hat that he loved so well, on the girl packed up. The man stood above her, looking very happy, these two, but now the Great Wheel of Fate beneath.

"MY DARLING LITTLE GIRL,—All is ready, every-story would say to the girl a hundred times. She would remember when we worked together in that dingy ware-shining so brightly, the birds sang so merrily, and gently stroke and fondle them.

Afterwards they washed the plates in the stream, and nestle closer to him, and he would take her in his arms, and a sweet scent came up from the fresh, green grass had turned its ugly side towards them, and they must look bright and new. The girl knew that his loving, paper, and, going to the door, called loudly for her land-side, she stooped hastily down to collect them. She of the other, for joy, and happiness, and good luck.

They did not say much; only the man's face was very sinking at his heart, and presently saw her enter a machine, as the hay dropped down in bundles from it, and the love would shine from her eyes. They had been very happy. But we shall be a thousand times happier waking I have thought of nothing but you. And now swept past him. He followed slowly, with a strange Black City, down into the green country. It was a figure. It was absurd of him to have supposed that she came floating over the hedge.

P.S.—Notes inclosed.

"Hasty boy," she said, "how eager he his."

So the man went away.

When the packing was finished they sat down over the page, and settled to take a boat which went home for his love. She was to stay behind and wait for one which left for America the next day. She turned to the station, they took a train away from the Great thing is prepared for you, come out to me at once. At lovely day early in July; the sun was shining brightly soft soil, and where rocks were to be found, and where a earnest glance was resting upon her, and there was a back, and called to the driver to proceed.

Thus they wandered about the live-long morning in the shabby coat and the faded skirt, and on the little girl's eyes. Occasionally their hands would seek each clean shaven and straight as an arrow. Bah! I could met his but she did not appear to notice him. The man would have come out in the little worn hat, and the girl's soft fingers in his own great, strong ones and flew about in graceful curves, twittering playfully. In the water, there to earn fame and wealth, and to make a little valley. Here they found a shady resting place, that she thought of her lover's letter. She read it the splashing stream, they made their vows. They fluttered down on the floor. Putting the letter on one glen, where the tall pines grew straight out from the last I shall meet you again. Every moment of the past counted them up, and then she kissed the thin pieces of the time has come. I only want you—I would to heaven that she might keep the few belongings that she left him.

"It is something like him," she was saying to herself, together again, and there, beneath the waving trees, by her this letter. She opened it eagerly, and the notes was starving—I had not a penny in the world. But the next field a carter was calling to his horses as they sprang out at the door of a fashionable costumiers.

At that moment the girl turned round. Her eyes and stood before her.

He motioned the driver to stop, and then with renewed pretence of eating. They uncorked a small bottle of own Boy."

Five years later he wrote this letter:

"I must enjoy myself here, now that I have the part. The man was to go away to the great land across other in sympathy, and then the man would take the future. But these things are not for other ears.

The girl was sitting alone in a little room at the top house. How sad it all was, and yet, even then, we were up at the sad, handsome face above her.

Her lover on the other side of the Atlantic watched me, and then, as they say out here, 'I struck it rich.' So that I could have written before. Three weeks ago I was at his post as usual, his eye was attracted by the lady. She paid her bill, and, telling the good woman had brought, they spread out their feast, and made a forward—how well he knew every line of that face and this is a wonderful land, and my old luck came back to when I see you. I cannot write much now. Do you chance," she said to herself.

The girl looked at him for a moment, and then drew near, was wearing. Suddenly he started eagerly impatiently every liner that came in. One day, when he come out to me, at once, my darling, I will tell you all now, after these five long years of weary waiting.—Your hope, and with a smile on his face, he sprang on the step of a big tenement building when the postman brought a cab, drove rapidly away from the slums, and presently through, and then put it lightly on one side.

Digitized by Google

HIGH PLAY.

A COMEDY OFF THE STAGE.

By George Manville Fenn.

SUMMARY.

The story opens with an interview between Lady Braetoun and her son Roderick, in which she endeavours to induce him to give up fast living and marry Olive, Isaac Emsworth's heiress. After the interview he goes to see his racehorse in the country with Lucy Lee, a chorus girl, familiarly known as "Baby." Emsworth takes Olive to consult Dr. Murray, who advises a voyage to South Africa in the *Greyberg*, in which he also is going. Roderick, who is friendly with Murray, comes for advice on the terribly bad condition of his health, and the Doctor recommends a trip in the same boat.

CHAPTER VI.

Lady Braetoun Believes in Fate.

"Oh, Roderick, my darling, what have you been doing?"

"Doing, mother? Nothing. I don't know what you mean."

"I mean, why, of course, about Miss Emsworth. You have ruined everything. You foolish, rakish young fellow, you think that you understand women, and so you do, perhaps, those of a certain set; but when some sweet, genuine, innocent girl is in the question, you are perfect babies."

"Oh, I dare say," said Braetoun sarcastically, "but don't bother me with conundrums, please; I'm too unwell to be trying to guess them."

"Yes, you do look miserably ill, and it would be enough to set anyone against you. Hadn't you the common sense to see that a certain amount of diplomacy was needed—feminine diplomacy—and that I, your mother, was working everything in the right way? Oh, you foolish boy! I do believe you have thrown a million away."

"Have I?" he said coolly; "well, I am very sorry. I want it badly enough."

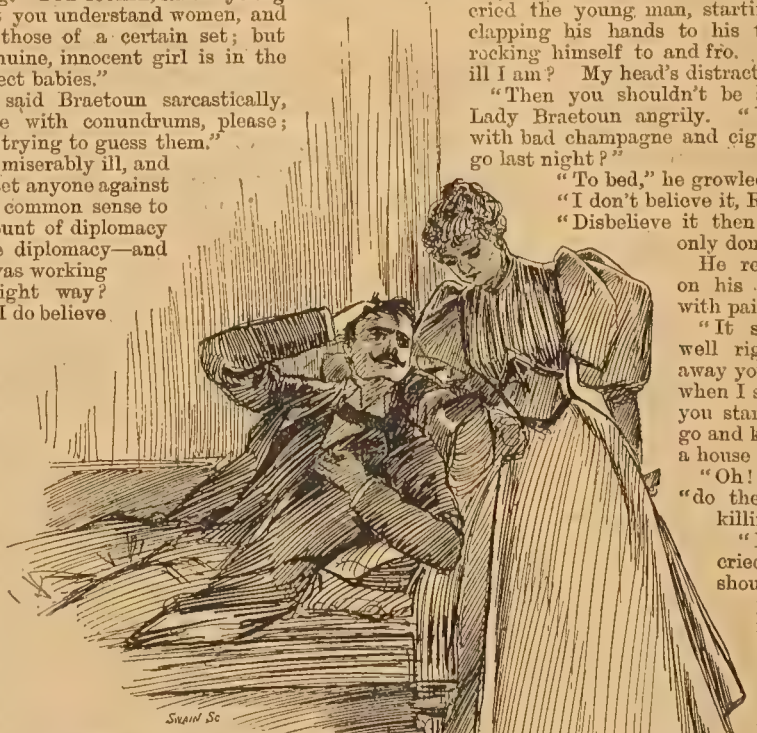
"And might have had it for the asking—at the proper time, when I told you."

"Dear me!" said Braetoun contemptuously, as he turned his head impatiently on the couch, and made a gesture suggestive of weariness.

"Everything was working so well. He was asking my advice, and she was quite looking up to me as a mother full of wisdom who would guide her safely through the shoals, rocks, and quicksands of society."

"D——n society!" muttered the young man impatiently.

"Your foolish rashness, or some knowledge he must have picked up about you, has spoiled all. What have you been doing?"



"Don't bother me with conundrums, please."

All rights reserved by George Manville Fenn.]

"Nothing—nothing new."

"Then it must be something of the old. Or did you go and speak to her?"

"No."

"Or to him?"

"No."

"Then he must have heard about that wretched theatre woman and——"

"D——n it all, mother, don't drive me mad," cried the young man, starting up on the couch, clapping his hands to his throbbing head, and rocking himself to and fro. "Can't you see how ill I am? My head's distracting."

"Then you shouldn't be so dissipated," cried Lady Braetoun angrily. "You poison yourself with bad champagne and cigars. Where did you go last night?"

"To bed," he growled.

"I don't believe it, Rod."

"Disbelieve it then: do what you like, only don't worry me."

He rested his head lower on his hands, and moaned with pain.

"It serves you perfectly well right. You've thrown away your fortune, and now, when I saw a chance to make you start afresh in life, you go and knock it all down like a house of cards."

"Oh!" groaned Braetoun, "do they hang a man for killing his mother?"

"I don't know," she cried bitterly; "try. I should be almost glad if you did kill me, Rod, for you broke my heart years ago."

"Bah!"

"How could you do it! You should have left it to me."

"Here, what the dickens are you talking about?" he cried now, sitting up suddenly. "What million—what him—what her? Are you telling me all this, or am I mad and is it some confused dream? My head's jigging, and my brain reeling: that cursed stuff has half poisoned me."

"Then you shouldn't have taken it, you miserable boy."

"I was obliged to," he groaned. "Go and get the bottle

and give me some more. Perhaps I shall be better then. It must be right."

"It isn't right, Rod, and before I'd get the wretched stuff and give you any more, I'd see my poor arm drop off."

"Drop—drop," he said drowsily, and looking at her with a vacant stare. "Yes, another drop."

"I will not, Roderick, not a drop!"

"Must—must take it. Go and fetch the bottle—in my bedroom."

"Brandy, I suppose," said Lady Braetoun angrily. "Never! Oh, how could I ever have given birth to such a monster! Roderick, you are killing yourself."

"Eh? Kill myself?" he said, staring as if making an effort to grasp his mother's words.

"Yes, killing yourself."

"No: my last chance, old lady. Must have another try. Think better now. I suppose it's right. Must have some more, go and get it. On the dressing-table."

"No," cried Lady Braetoun passionately; "not a drop do you have if I can prevent it. You're drifting into a lunatic asylum."

"I wish I was in one, for I'm nearly mad now. Fetch it. Does dull the pain a bit. Must be right."

"Roderick, you have got to the worst stage in which a man can be. You went yesterday and overset all my plans; and now in your foolish despair you are intoxicating yourself with brandy."

"Brandy?"

"Yes, sir, brandy, and in your bedroom, too."

"Brandy—brandy——" he said, passing his hands over his forehead, and staring vacantly about the carpet. "Head's gone—can't think. Ah, there it comes back! It's agony. Quick, fetch it before I go off. Little bottle—on dressing-table—teaspoonful?"

"Roderick! what do you mean?" cried Lady Braetoun, looking at him excitedly. "Where did you go yesterday?"

"Eh?" he said vacantly, as he struggled up once more, and as if striving to follow what was said to him. "Go—yes'day? Dunno."

"You went to Mr. Emsworth's did you not? Look here."

She tapped a letter which she held in her hand. "It's all an excuse. Thanks me for my kindness to his child, and he is going to take her over to Africa."

"Is he?" said Braetoun.

"Yes: all an excuse. He has grown suspicious, and has set us down for fortune hunters. Just like a man of his class. When did you go?"

"Yes'day," said Braetoun vacantly. "Said he'd give me one more chance."

"Oh! Then there is hope yet," cried Lady Braetoun eagerly.

"Yes: s'pose so. Just a little. That stuff pulls me together for a bit, and then it comes on again."

"But what madness to fly to brandy now!"

"No, no; drops."

"Well, drops. Just when he has told you he would give you another chance."

"Yes—said, take them. Going to turn over new leaf."

"Well, well, then do. Oh, my boy, don't, don't, pray, throw away your prospects like this."

"D'y'ear? Get it," he said thickly. "Teaspoon—in glass o' water, be quick!"

"Rod, what does this mean?—drops—what drops?"

"Murray—gave me—yes'day," he groaned. "Sends me—sleep."

"Murray? Doctor Murray?"

"Umps! Give's hold."

"You went to Doctor Murray yesterday?"

He sat up and stared.

His mother caught him by the shoulders excitedly. "Was this before or after you went to Mr. Emsworth's?"

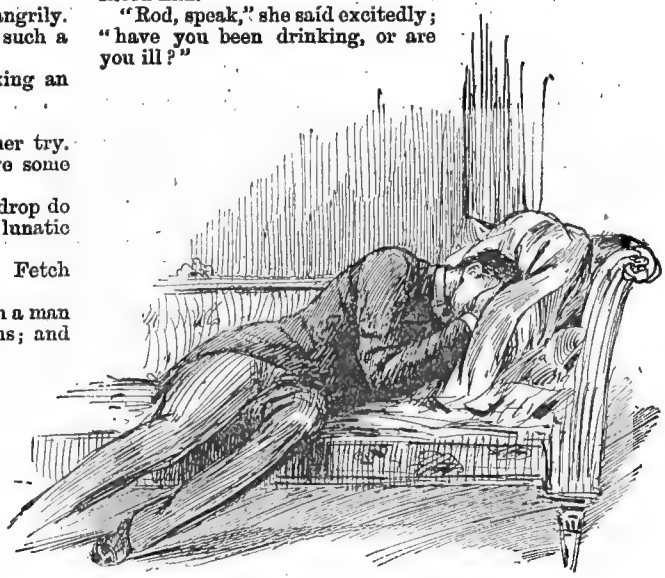
"Emsworth's? Dunno. Yes. Didn't go to Emsworth's. Saw him at Wimpole Street. Be quick 'fore pain comes back."

"Then you did not go to Mr. Emsworth's and propose to Olive?"

"Eh? No."

He held out his hand as if for a glass, and Lady Braetoun shook him.

"Rod, speak," she said excitedly; "have you been drinking, or are you ill?"



He sank sideways until his head touched the cushions.

"D——d bad—ill," he said. "Murray—says—killing myself."

"Yes, yes, quite right. Go on."

"No, no," he said in a dull, stupid way, as he struggled to grasp his mother's meaning; "not quite right—quite wrong. Going to South Africa."

"It's drink, and he's utterly intoxicated," cried Lady Braetoun wildly.

"Off directly—South Africa, with Doctor—old Bourne. Pull me round."

"You are going to South Africa—with the Doctor?"

"Yes. Last chance. Pull me round. Get the bottle?"

Lady Braetoun backed from him, looking bewildered, and stood wringing her hands till the diamonds upon her fingers gritted together and crackled. Then, as if moved by a sudden impulse, she rushed out of the room, leaving her son rocking himself to and fro upon the couch.

In two minutes she was back, with a bottle and glass in her trembling hands. Then, reading the directions, she shook the phial, poured out a portion, and pressed it in her son's hands.

"There," she said; "take it. Quick!"

He mechanically took the glass, swallowed the little dose at a gulp, and uttered a sign of contentment, while his mother stood watching him for a few minutes.

"Tell me, Rod, dear," she said, in a low, agitated voice, "did you go and propose to Miss Emsworth yesterday?"

"Eh?"

She repeated her question, and he grasped it this time.

"No," he said, "too bad. 'Bliged to go to Murray. Sea voyage. Set me up. Head buzzes. Yes, sea voyage with old—Cape."

"Oh!" ejaculated Lady Braetoun softly, as she gazed

Digitized by Google

wonderingly at her son, who was staring vacantly about the floor, and then she hurriedly read the letter once more. "Then it is true. No, he must have heard something to set him against us." Then aloud:

"Rod, dear."

"Eh?" said the young man, starting. "Was I asleep?"

"No, dear. Is your head better?"

"Eh? Just a little. Going off now."

"When are you going?"

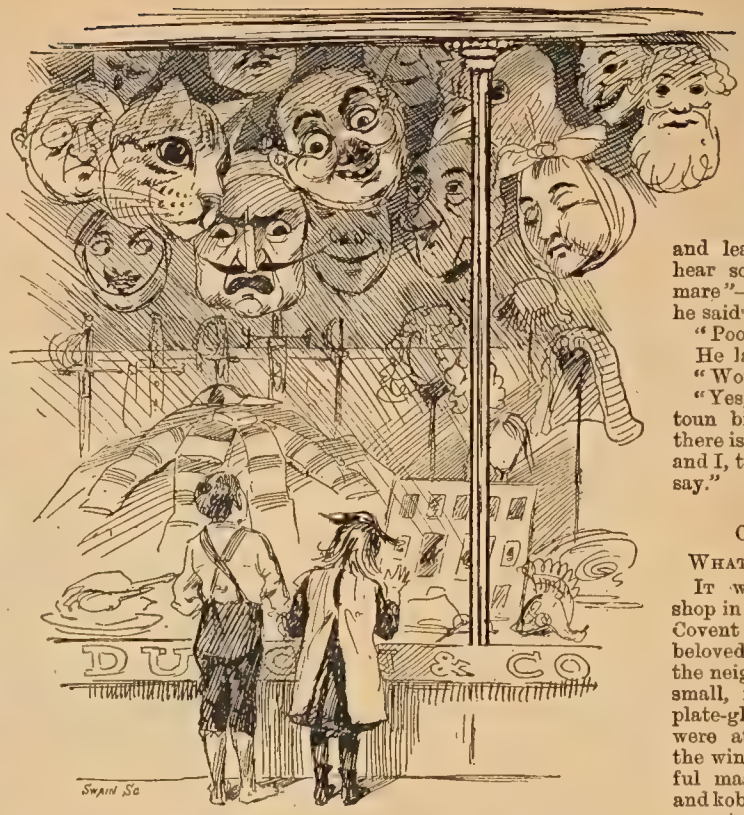
"To-morrow—next day."

"In what vessel, dear?" said Lady Braetoun, after another glance at the letter.

"Same as old Bourne and the Doctor. Greybourne—Grey—Grey—Grey——"

"Berg? Greyberg, dear?"

"Yes, Greyberg. Pull me together. Get better. Come back and ask old Emsworth. Get married, and be a good boy, eh?"



A showy-looking shop in Great Russell Street.

He sank sideways until his head touched the cushions, and, uttering a low sigh, he seemed to drop off directly into a deep sleep, while his mother drew a chair to the side of the couch, sat down and read the letter again, and then uttered a long deep sigh as she tightened her lips and nodded her head softly.

After a time she rang the bell, and a footman appeared.

"Order the carriage to come round at once, Robert."

"Yes, my lady," said the man, with a glance at the couch.

"His lordship is very unwell, Robert."

"Yes, my lady, been quite off his head two or three times, but he went to the doctor yesterday."

"Indeed, how do you know?"

"Sent me to Bell's to get a prescription made up, my lady, and I gave him a dose when I got back. Out of that bottle, my lady. Beg pardon, my lady."

"Yes: what is it?"

"I've been packing his things, my lady, three portmanteaus. But will he be well enough to go on Friday?"

"Oh yes, Robert. It is only a temporary indisposition. That will do."

The man left the room, and Lady Braetoun sat musing for a few minutes.

"I'll go on and bid him good-bye," she thought. "No, I'll write. Perhaps better. I should talk about the voyage, and they might not know. How delightful it is," she said to herself bitterly, "this tender affection between mother and son. Drawn tightly together in such loving bonds. Going to South Africa on Friday, and the mother has to learn it all from one of the servants. I am sorry," she said half aloud, "very sorry, that I did not have three or four more sons."

She carefully folded the letter and placed it in a writing-case, before ringing again and counter-ordering the carriage.

"A false alarm. My heart throbs even yet. How strange! Is there really such an influence as Fate?"

She started, for Braetoun began muttering, and she went and leant over his couch to hear something about "the mare"—"the odds," and then he said quite distinctly:

"Poor little Luce."

He laughed softly.

"Wonder what she'll say."

"Yes," sighed Lady Braetoun bitterly. "I'm afraid there is such a thing as Fate; and I, too, wonder what she'll say."

CHAPTER VII.

What Came to Lucy Lee.

It was a showy-looking shop in Great Russell Street, Covent Garden, one dearly beloved by the children of the neighbourhood, great and small, for, behind the tall plate-glass windows there were attractions galore. In the winter there were wonderful masks: demons, gnomes, and kobolds, and gauzy fabrics appertaining to fairyland—stage—diaphanous creations, spangled with silver, great dragonfly-like wings, wands tipped with stars, and golden tresses and curls hung so abundantly that they suggested that one of the horned demons with fiery eyes had been on a scalping expedition in fairyland and had great luck.

At other times of the year there would be operatic knightly armour suitable for fair limbs, helmets and plumes; brilliant swords which might fail in cutting the leaves of a book, but, deftly used, certainly good enough of edge to divide a ripe pear. Fleshings of silk or tinted thread, velvet, spangles, and lace *bottines* with satin or kid heels, and gloves and gauntlets glittering with metal of wondrous sheen.

"Duncan and Co," was to be read in gold letters on plate glass with a chocolate ground, and a merry trade had been carried on there for years, in supplying costumes for opera, ballet, pantomime, and burlesque. In fact, it might have been supposed that in a small way, Duncan would have made a large fortune; and so he would if success had attended all the productions for which costumes had been supplied, but as, at a moderate computation, about nineteen out of every score were blighted by what in theatrical parlance is called "a frost," the fortune was not made.

In fact, it would not have been of much advantage to Duncan if there had only been an average of one frost to the score of new pieces, for that worthy gentleman took matters very easily, and strong drinks with the same facility. So many good-hearted theatrical friends insisted upon his "taking a drink," with them, that his works, which were made by Nature more especially for the consumption of solids, refused at last to go. Then he did an enormous amount of winding up with stronger and stronger draughts: in fact at last it was rumoured that when he called for "Brandy hot" he meant brandy hot, and not an infusion of Sp. 1. Aqua 3.

Digitized by Google

Finally the works stopped, and the business went on.

Mrs. Duncan, a rather florid lady, had always looked upon herself as "Co," and while her lord took the orders, had done all the work, personally or by deputy, so that there was no check in the business.

A new burlesque was in preparation at the Thespis, and specimens of the work being done by hand and machine by Mrs. Duncan and the young ladies lay about on the back room tables and chairs, in the shape of amber satin jockey shirts, and amber and black caps, drawers, breeches, and black and cream satin top boots. For there was to be a jockey ballet in the second act, and Lucy had suggested that they should wear Lord Braetoun's racing colours.

"And so," Mrs. Duncan said, "the corpse will be in hamber," without for a moment recalling the position of the geological fly.

Duncan and Co. had been very busy with her scissors, and one of the completed costumes was on view, to the great satisfaction of a knot of dirty children, whose proceedings in their excitement became so demonstrative, displayed as it was in holding up "Little Sally," or "Betsy Hann," to see, that at last Mrs. Duncan could bear it no longer, but sallied out to scatter her enemies—to put the objectionable audience to rout.

"Here, what's the use o' my having that there window cleaned for you to come putting your nasty 'ands-an' noses all over it again? Be off or I'll send for the perlice. They're close by, you know."

The children were aware of the fact, for it is not a long cry from Great Russell Street to that of Bow, so they took flight in the direction of Drury Lane, darted down a court, and the most daring of them shouted "Yah!"

"I dunno what we pay rates for," grumbled Mrs. Duncan. "The place swarms with the brats, an' it oughter be stopped, and—well, now, on'y to think of it, and me not in my best cap! Bless her! She don't forget her old aunt, even if she have got her brome and her dymons."

The lady drew back inside the shop door, and directly after the particularly neat brougham with high stepping horse, driven by a severe-looking servant in livery, drew up at the kerb, the door was opened, and Lucy Lee, otherwise "Baby" stepped out, "looking like a Dooshess," Mrs. Duncan afterwards said, the door was closed, and the little lady turned to the servant.

"Wait," she said shortly.

The man touched his hat, and sat staring straight before him, while Lucy swept with rustling skirts into the shop, whose door was immediately closed by its owner, as if it were a trap, and she had just taken an unwary bird, one which she folded immediately in her arms.

"My own precious!" she cried, after bestowing a couple of sounding kisses upon her visitor's lips. "My! you do look lovely this morning, Baby."

"Lovely?" said the girl bitterly. "After crying my eyes nearly out of my head. Oh, auntie!"

"What is it, my precious? Here, stop a moment, and I'll send the gals upstairs."

Mrs. Duncan passed through a glass door, closing it after her, and voices were heard. A minute later, she reappeared, to stand waving one arm to her visitor in the fashion always adopted by legitimate Hamlet's ghosts, and Baby stepped into the back room, dropped into a chair, and laid her hands upon the work-encumbered table, her head sank upon them, and she began to sob hysterically.

"Oh, my precious lamb! Don't, don't take on like that. What is the matter? Tell its Auntie, then. Why, Lu, my girl, you don't mean it? He arn't come back from the voyage? He ain't dead, is he?"

The girl started up with her face convulsed, and her eyes flashing with indignant rage.

"No," she cried, "he isn't dead. He has come back quite well."

"And that's a comfort, my dear."

"Comfort!" cried the girl contemptuously. "Not it. I wish he was dead."

"Nonsense, my dear; I see you've been having a tiff."

"Tiff!" cried Lucy scornfully.

"Why, he 'aven't dared to 'it you, 'ave he?"

Lucy shook her head, and tried to speak, but for a time no words would come; and at last as her Aunt bent over her, she uttered a bitter cry, flung her arms about the ordinary looking woman's neck, buried her face in her breast, and sobbed passionately.

"My own precious, then! There, there, there, there; let it come, and you'll be better soon. There, try and tell its Auntie what it's all about. Mind, pet; this is such a pretty bonnet; and take care, too, of your lace. Oh, come, come, come, you mustn't spoil those bright eyes. Where's its ankychy then? Let me wipe 'em. Ah, that's better."

"Oh, oh, oh," sobbed Lucy wearily, as she turned her pitiful face slowly upward, and joined her little red petal-like lips to those reaching down to kiss her lovingly. "Oh, Auntie, Auntie, I'm the most unhappy, miserable girl in the world."

"No, no, no; don't say that, precious. You're the most beautiful; and look at you with your carriage and jools and dresses, and all real, my darling. No property dymons and rubbish. Tell me, then, what it's all been about? I know, you've been spending too much money, you naughty puss, and he don't like it, of course."

"No, no, it isn't that," said the girl piteously; "it's far, far worse."

"Nonsense, my dear, don't be absurd. I know; it's only a bit of a quarrel."

"Quarrel! no," moaned Lucy. "I never could quarrel with him. Auntie, it's all over now. I couldn't believe it of him."

"Over? Why, you don't mean to say as he's chucked you?"

The girl gave a quick, short nod.

"Well, of all!" exclaimed Mrs. Duncan. "But there, I'm not surprised. It was sure to come about some time. I always knew it."

"Oh, Auntie," cried the girl indignantly; "how can you talk like that! You always said I was a lucky girl, for he loved me very dearly, and would never leave me."

"Did I, my precious?"

"Yes, you know you did."

"Ah, well, perhaps I did. It was to please you, I suppose. But there, don't take on, it'll all come right in the end."

"Come right! How can it? He's going to be married!"

"Is he, now, my dear? You don't say so? Who's he going to marry?"

"A Miss Emsworth."

"Money?"

"Oh, yes, rich as rich."

"That's it, my dear. I was right then. He'd never have chucked you over if it hadn't been for that. They say he has lost a deal lately over horses. They nearly all do."

"Lost?" said Lucy naïvely; "has he?"

"Heaps they say. Why you ought to know."

"No," said the girl, wiping her eyes; "I don't know anything about it. How should I? I only had what I wanted. I never troubled about money."

"Of course not, my precious; why should you? No theaytre lidy as respected herself would ever trouble about money—but there, there, there, wipe your precious, pretty eyes, and don't fret about it. Men's all alike, and there isn't one on 'em now your uncle's dead worth a second thought."

"But I can't help it, Auntie, I love him ever so, I never knew how much I loved him till now."

"Stuff, little goose! There, you'll think different to-morrow. You're faint with fretting, and low-spirited now. You want a snack, my pretty, that's what you want. There, wipe your eyes, and I'll send one of the gals to order a couple of dozen oysters and a bottle of stout."

"No, no, no, Auntie. I don't want anything of the kind."

"Oh yes you do, and so do I."

"Yes, you're always wanting stout and oysters, Auntie," said the girl bitterly.

"Well, my precious, one must have some support to make up for the wear and tear. You don't know what I suffer over the business, and the losses and worries. Always somebody going wrong and can't pay. If your poor dear uncle had only been ruled by me, he'd have put everything in a pub with a good luncheon bar. There's no sending in your bill ten times there, and then only getting something on account. It's all pay down cash over the counter, and no book-keeping to put straight. Now, do let me send for a snack."

"No, no, no, Auntie!"

"All cash, my dear, and the profits are grand. Is she very good-looking?"

"Eh? Oh, she! Yes, Auntie, I suppose so."

Mrs. Duncan gave the table a loud slap with her open hand, and drew herself up very stiffly—that is, as stiffly as such a plump-looking woman could.

"Don't tell me," she cried angrily, "she can't be one half so pretty as you are, my precious, and so I'd tell her, to her face, as soon as look at her."

Lucy's forehead wrinkled all over, and she looked half piteously, half lovingly, at the flushed, coarse woman before her.

"Poor, dear, silly old Aunt," she said; and she reached forward and kissed her.

"That I'm not, my precious," cried the woman returning the kiss with interest. "There isn't a prettier, nor nicer, nor more loveable little pet in London, and I'll be bound to say, if the truth's known, it nips him ever so, to part with you. What did he say?"

"Wait," she said shortly.

"Not much," said the girl sadly. "Said he was ruined and couldn't afford it any longer, and that I must go."

"Did he tell you himself that he was going to be married?"

"Yes, he told me all very nicely, Auntie. He said his mother wished it, and he was obliged, for the sake of the family name."

"Then you didn't quarrel?"

"Oh, no, Auntie. I said some nasty things, but he was very nice and kind."

"Pore boy. He's very sorry, and no wonder. And is it quite all over? Bailiffs in?"

"Bailiffs, Auntie?"

"Yes, at Brompton. Have they seized, and going to be a sale?"

"Oh, no, Auntie. Rod told me the house and furniture and the brougham and horse were mine; and he has put five hundred pounds in the bank for me, he says."

"Pore dear boy. Well, I always liked him. I call it very nice and handsome of him, my dear, and I don't think you've got anything whatever to fret about, for of course you keep your jools."

"Oh, Auntie, Auntie!" cried the girl desperately, "you don't know—you don't know;" and she let her face fall in her hands, and sobbed convulsively.

"Yes, I do, my darling, and so will you, some day. I've had plenty of experience, and know what's what. I call it very handsome of him. But five 'underd ain't much. You ought to have screwed him up to a thou, somehows."

"Oh, Auntie, Auntie, how can you—how can you?"

"There, there, there, my pet, you leave it all to me. Wipe your pretty eyes. I'll settle it all for you. The sooner you come home the better, and I'll have the furniture and horse and carriage sold at once, and pay off the servants. I can soon get that pretty little house let, and you'd better put the money in the business. It will be safe."

"Not a penny of it, Auntie," cried the girl, snatching off her veil. "Do you think I'd take the house or a penny of his money? I'd sooner starve!"

"Now, Louy, my own precious one," cried her aunt, "don't go on like that. You're not on the stage now, and this is real life, not drammer."

"Yes it is, Aunt, drama of life," cried the girl passionately.

Digitized by Google

"I thought all men were alike once, just as you said they were—fools with money to waste; but I know differently now. He made me love him, and I'm not ashamed to own it. I do love him, dearly, and I'll show him I do. Take his money or his presents and house? No, not so much as a ring. I'll come home and work with the girls here, and be no expense to you; but take anything of his? No, I'd sooner go off the bridge."

"Lucy!"

"Yes, but not yet," cried the girl, with a fierce look coming into her eyes. "If Rod thinks I'm going to sit down and suffer this, he's mistaken."

"Why, Lucy, my precious, what do you mean?"

"Mean, Auntie? Why to behave as a jealous woman would."

"But this ain't acting, my dear—it ain't a play."

"Isn't it, Aunt? Oh, yes it is, to me. Handsome and rich and to be his idol?" she cried bitterly. "No, it shall never be."

"Why, Lucy. What has come to you?" whispered the old woman.

"The Devil, I think, Auntie," cried the girl passionately. "I told Rod I would if anyone came between us, and I will."

"Now, now, now, Lucy, none of that," cried Mrs. Duncan, catching the girl in her arms; "no temper now. Don't you go talking and thinking of that sort of thing, or you may work yourself up in your passion and be going and doing it. But, there, you're only acting, and I don't want you to take the stage."

"No, Auntie, I hate the idea of the stage now. Let me stop with you."

"Of course, and lucky am I to 'ave you again, pet. But I meant about those things. You see, this isn't one of poor dear Tom Robertson's plays, my precious. You ain't a Hester Heccles, with a tipsy old father—and, oh! how true it all was, and how I have cried over it all!—but it's real life with your old Auntie."

"Yes, Aunt, dear."

"Then I wouldn't chuck all those things and that money out of spite, my darling, because it's a deal."

"You're always wanting stout and oysters, Auntie."

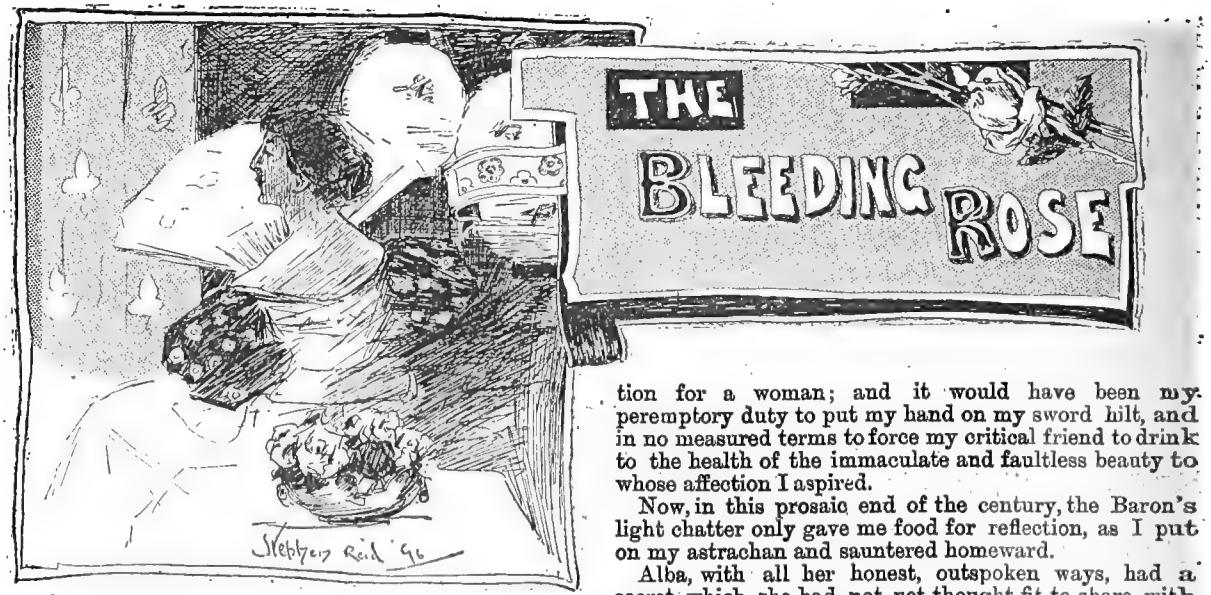
The blood flushed to the girl's pale face, and she sprang to her feet, with her eyes flashing.

"It isn't spite, Auntie," she cried. "I can't, I won't bring away a thing. I feel that I can't stoop to do it. I gave him all. I love him still, but I can't be paid and sent away like this. He mustn't think that of me."

"Very well, then, my precious, you shan't bring back nothing. I don't care. I don't want 'em; I was only thinking of you. Let him keep 'em and give 'em to his wife."

"Yes, let him give them to his wife," cried Lucy passionately; "and—to his wife—to his wife—his wife!"

(To be continued.)



"*Parbleu!* The lady was in Paris three winters ago and broke several hearts, both French and English. I give you my word."

So said the Baron de la Sameraye in answer to a remark which fell from my lips in the smoking-room of the International Club, Boulevard Malesherbes, where the young bloods were discussing, far too freely, the beauties of the English colony in Paris.

I must confess that I was more than deeply interested in a certain Miss Alba Van Amster, whose quiet beauty heightened the cultivated talents and brilliant education that study had given her.

Having hazarded the belief that this was the young lady's first season in Paris, in answer to a question from Count Bodega, who did me the honour, as he fancied, by being jealous of my intimacy with the Van Amsters, the Baron had chimed in with the above assertion — an assertion which chilled not a little the reverence which had accompanied my worship of the beautiful Alba.

"If your intimacy admits of the question," added the loquacious Baron, "ask *la belle demoiselle* if she remembers New Year's Eve three years ago."

A hundred years ago a man with my pretensions to gallantry would take every opportunity to advertise his admiration for a woman; and it would have been my peremptory duty to put my hand on my sword hilt, and in no measured terms to force my critical friend to drink to the health of the immaculate and faultless beauty to whose affection I aspired.

Now, in this prosaic end of the century, the Baron's light chatter only gave me food for reflection, as I put on my astrachan and sauntered homeward.

Alba, with all her honest, outspoken ways, had a secret which she had not yet thought fit to share with me.

After all, knowing her sterling qualities as I did, and, though not an affianced suitor, still admitted by herself and mother into almost domestic relations, had I any right to question her on the past which could never, I was sure, have implicated her purity or trust?

I had only known Alba Van Amster for sixteen months, and the episode referred to had taken place, if there was no mistaken identity, just three years ago.

Anyhow, to-morrow, New Year's day, the Van Amsters gave a dance in their lovely hotel in the Avenue d'Eylau, and I certainly did not intend to refer to any past New Year's Eve without some very good reasons.

Three years to-night; and I wondered with a curious interest that only my intense devotion licensed, what could have made Alba so reticent about any former visit to Paris.

And, as my reflections grew more absorbing and the night grew colder, I found suddenly that instead of turning to the right and going back to my hotel in the Chaussée d'Antin I had wandered to the left, crossed the Elysian Fields, and was treading the crisp white snow not far from Alba's own house.

With the infatuation that holds a lover, I determined to see the window, if not the lights behind it, of

Digitized by Google

the room where Alba slept. It was scarcely midnight. The stars were frostily brilliant, and a belated *fiacre*, coming from Passy, gave the only sound, and that but a faint tinkle of buckles and harness.

There was a light in Alba's window as I passed. Suddenly a wailing moan distinctly heard swept with a palpable breeze around my ears, and the white horse of the passing *fiacre* started like a two-year-old, and for an instant seemed terrified into a runaway.

A gruff objurgation from the coachman accompanied by a thump from the butt end of his broken whip brought the old hack to his senses, and dispelled by its matter-of-fact realism the sensation of uncanniness which the moaning sound had sent with a shiver through me.

As I turned again to look at Alba's window I saw that the light had been extinguished.

At that moment the window, opening like most French windows doorwise on to the balcony, flew ajar for an instant, but an icy breeze coming round the house banged it to, and swept the crisp snow off the sills in a wreath that looked almost like a human form as it flew past the railings.

Then the same wailing sound sent a second shiver through me, and I pulled up the collar of my coat, trying to close my ears with the fur.

At the next *carrefour* I found a *fiacre* which soon deposited me at the door of my hotel. On entering my room I sat down and piled up logs on the glowing embers, without a thought of going to bed. Sleep was impossible.

So Alba had some romance, but three years old, which she could not or would not tell me.

After all, her past did not belong to me, any more than mine to her. What? Was I to swear to love and cherish without a right to bare her heart? Could I see into her soul as far as this screen allowed and no farther?

And my thoughts would revert to the Baron's words at the club, and then my astral body travelled over the wrong road again to my Alba's window, and I heard again the mournful wail outside mine.

I don't know when I fell asleep. But I awoke chilly and shivering. The embers, choked with ashes, gave a feeble blush to the grate, and I crept into bed with that moaning sound in my ears, only to wake again when François brought my morning coffee to my bedside.

I knew the Baron always breakfasted about noon at the club, and, determined to worm some facts out of him I took a constitutional in the Champs Elysées before tackling the noble foreigner.

"Baron," said I, as we sat to a pilaff and some scrambled eggs, *à l'Espagnole*, "was there a duel in the case of Miss Van Amster when she was last seen in Paris?"

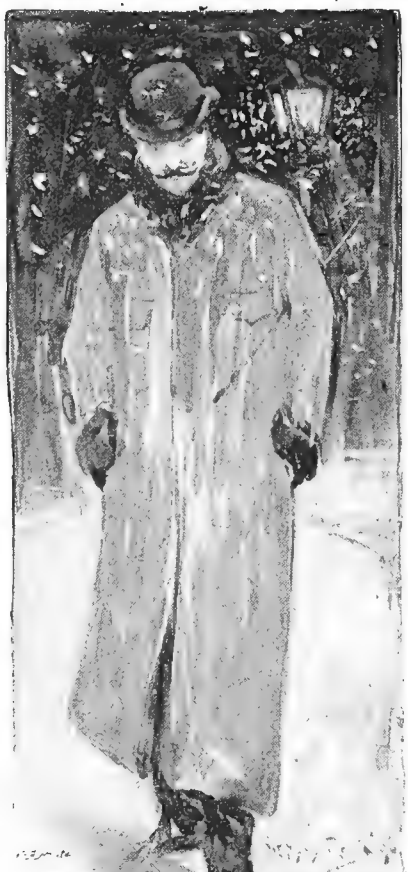
At this moment there came into the dining-room a tall, handsome man, of Spanish type, with flashing dark eyes and pale complexion, dressed to perfection, and with all the style of a military chief about him.

"*Comment, mon cher Colonel?*" cried the little Baron, jumping up and shaking the new-comer's hand affectionately. "What good wind blew you this way? It is three years since you gave Paris the pleasure of your presence."

Then, introducing me, the Baron forced the Colonel to sit down at our breakfast table. Colonel d'Espartello was a Basque, with all the *fougue* and Southern enthusiasm of his race. He had just returned from Africa, where he had lately received his rank.

"*Apropos*," said the chattering Baron, "you left Paris shortly after that unfortunate affair of Prévelle's. I suppose you know the lovely Miss Van Amster is again in Paris?"

"Not really!" replied the handsome Colonel, with a tinge of colour passing over his pale cheeks. "But I have overcome that infatuation long ago. Poor Prévelle! It was, indeed, an unfortunate affair. He was far more deeply in love than I was; that is quite certain."



I pulled up the collar of my coat.

The subject seemed unpleasant, and soon the young Colonel was entertaining us with his accounts of a new French acquisition in Africa, and how his gallant men behaved in the sanguinary skirmishes they had with the natives. And then he suddenly remembered an appointment. When he had left us, my friend, the Baron, rolling a cigarette in his fingers, said to me as he lighted his smoke:

"That is almost the answer to your question. *Le beau colonel*, just gone, was also one of the fair Alba's admirers. He was the Prince's second in his duel with Armand Prévelle. But you know nothing about the duel? Is it possible? Come for a stroll outside and I will tell you all about it.

"When the Van Amsters, mother and daughter, were last in Paris—there is a father living, I am creditably informed, wrapt up in stocks and buried in your Capel Court, for the better gilding of Miss Alba's dowry—Miss Van Amster was no less lovely than now, but without to-day's experience.

"Not only is Alba far the prettiest in the English colony, but speaking our language perfectly, and having the best Holland blood in her veins, she has been much sought after by Parisians of the highest standing.

"There was no doubt that she was as fond of Prévelle, the handsomest man in Paris, as he was devoted to her, until the arrival of Prince Kracovieff from Nice, where the girl had met the Russian the winter previous. The Muscovite needed funds and had a real title for sale, so that Prévelle soon found himself second favourite.

Digitized by Google

"Two or three nights before the new year Prévelle had given a superb bouquet to Miss Alba, who took the finest orchid in the bunch to adorn the Prince, and though the coquette tried to pacify the Parisian, he felt it badly.

"It was scarcely to be supposed that a Frenchman would take the affront coolly; and it was not long before an opportunity occurred at the club for a quarrel.

"*Bref*—Prévelle slapped the Prince's face, and a duel took place the day before *le jour de l'an*, just three years ago.

"You wonder, perhaps, how I know all these details. I was the other's *témoin*, and Prévelle died in my arms.

"They fought in the Bois de Boulogne with pistols.

"The first fire passed without injury to one or the other; but the second from the Russian would have gone through poor Prévelle's heart had it not been checked by an obstacle. Curiously enough when we looked to the wound we found a large rosebud had choked up the hole in his chest carried inward by the bullet.

"Prévelle never breathed again. All the hemorrhage was within: but the petals of the flower were stained with his life blood.

"Poor boy! He was buried with the flower in his heart.

"There was a great row about the affair. Kracovieff returned to Moscow, and the Van Amsters went back to England.

"Now you know why I told you to ask Miss Alba if she recalled the *réveillon* of three years ago. I confess I always feel bitter when I think of my poor friend's death. But after all, why should I try to give the girl he loved pain? I have no right to be the young lady's judge."

The story was true, no doubt, and yet I had found nothing coquettish about Alba Van Amster. She had been true and sincere in everything but the fact that she never spoke of a former stay in Paris.

That evening there was a dance at the Van Amsters', and naturally I was one of the first to arrive.

Alba was not by any means looking radiant. She was terribly pale, and her eyes were red at the edges of the lids, as if she had suffered from tears of illness.

I brought with me the choicest bouquet I could find at Delaunoy's and she was on the point of removing a yellow rose and giving it to me when the memory of that duel seemed to traverse both our brains. My gesture must have been treacherous, for her face grew hard and she said, as a tear came in each lovely eye:

"Then you have heard the story too?"

I could not reply for the moment, and with a deep sigh Alba took the rose, whose pale lemon-coloured petals were like wax, and placed it in the *échancrure* of her dress.

At the same instant a waltz struck up, and almost automatically we glided into the ballroom among the dozen couples already assembled.

Only once in the dance did my partner speak. She whispered:

"You won't think unkindly of me, will you? Oh! why—why did they let you know!"

After the waltz we went into a small conservatory near the mother's boudoir, and sat down on a Persian settee surrounded by ferns and smilax. She turned her face pleadingly to me and was about to speak, when she noticed my eyes riveted on the rose in her *corsage*.

The yellow petals had turned red.

She saw it, too; and, clutching spasmodically at the chiffon round her bosom, she suddenly gave a cry of mingled pain and fear, and fell in a faint upon the couch.

Fell in a faint upon the couch.

At the same time her grasp on the gauzy material, tearing it away, added to her sudden fall backwards, revealed just over her heart a mark like a splash of blood.

This was the reason then for her high dress.

But it must have been an eruption of late date, for a natal wine mark would have been visible with the *décolletage* she used to allow herself. Her cry brought her mother to my aid, and she was carried by her maids to her room still unconscious.

I stood still, staring at the rose which I held in my hand; but the blood stain seemed to fade from the petals, and when I reached home, without knowing how I left the ballroom, the flower was again yellow, though drooping. Strange, very strange!

On calling to inquire after Miss Van Amster's condition the next day, the butler, in the low pathetic voice which well trained servants use when there is dangerous illness or a death in the family, told me Miss Alba was not allowed to see anyone, but that the young lady had sent down a letter to be delivered to me personally if I called.

The letter was from Alba, and is reproduced:

"Dearest,—If I have never told you of the sad affair which three years ago changed me from a flighty coquette to a reasoning woman, it was for fear you, whose affections I cherish, should think me still the heartlessly selfish creature I was at that time.

"Now, when I know that my life is fast ebbing away—for my fainting spell of last night was only the precursor to an attack which is killing me faster than even

Digitized by Google

my doctors imagine—I can tell you what no other must know while I live.

"And God knows, dear, I wanted to live for you and you only.

"Mother, who had put me in a convent for my education, always brought me up with the intention of selling

In the middle of the room stood Armand Prévelle.

my beauty for a title. I was allowed my own way in everything, and utter selfishness was the result, so that when I made my *début* in Paris, less than four years since, I expected as a right that every man should be at my feet who had any pretensions to taste or position.

"My girlish inclinations picked from out my circle of beaux a bright and cultured Frenchman, known on the Boulevard as the best-looking man in Paris. I don't think I knew what love meant; but Armand Prévelle danced well, played beautifully, and was generally attractive.

"At the same time Prince Kracovieff was encouraged by my mother, who little knew what a Russian prince was worth, but had strange hankerings after what she fancied a royal connection.

'How thoughtless I was, and how little accustomed to thinking of others, was well shown in the little incident which gave rise to a fatal duel. I had just given Armand the prettiest rose I could find in our conservatory when I took from his bouquet the blossom offered to the Prince, careless of the pain the act might give. I have never forgotten the broken-hearted look Armand gave me when he turned away and left the ballroom.

"I never saw him again alive.

"I say 'alive' for I saw him only two nights ago; and that is what you must know now.

"I have never had any belief in spirits revisiting the earth.

"I had in my fondness for you almost forgotten the past, except inasmuch as that sad experience had made me serious and introspective. You know, dear, I am no flirt.

"It was on New Year's Eve, and fatigued with our preparations for the dance of to-night—I am writing in bed, against orders, and it is not yet midnight—I had gone to my room rather earlier than I am accustomed.

"I was half undressed, and, having sent Fanchette to bed, I was examining my new ball dress, when I heard a sigh behind me.

"I turned, in doubt as to my senses, and there in the middle of the room stood Armand Prévelle, dressed in black, as he must no doubt have been the day of the duel.

"Though an icy shudder passed through me, I still had presence of mind sufficient to assure myself my senses were playing me false when, with the same look that I remembered, the phantom of Armand put his hand into his breast and drawing forth the yellow rose all dabbled with blood, he threw the blossom at my bosom. Then the lights went out, the window opened and shut with violence, and I remember no more. Finding myself, with daylight, lying on my bed, I imagined I had fallen asleep and dreamt the terrible dream.

"But, on looking at myself in the glass, what was my horror when I saw just over my heart the splash of crimson which nothing has removed.

"I shall go down to my grave with it still there. Of that there shall be no doubt.

"If that dream should come again, dearest, I shall surely die.

"And yet I had hoped for a beautiful, bright existence in your love. Oh! what have I done? Why did my mother make me lie to myself and all around me?

"It is close on midnight. Ah! If you were only near me to defend me. Icy, icy! As cold as death——"

When I called a second time the shutters were up. Alba Van Amster had dreamed again.

HONOR LUCELLE.

RESULT OF JUMBLE STORY COMPETITION.—NO. 3.

UNFORTUNATELY, the story in this instance appears to have been too simple for the majority of competitors, over four hundred of whom were absolutely correct. If the prizes were divided up among them, each would receive about sixpence. To select the neatest is impossible, for, as no mention was made of neat attempts in the conditions, no effort was made by competitors, and all the attempts sent in were equally moderately well put together, and there is nothing to choose between the best fifty. It has been decided, therefore, to send a silver-plated pencil-case to each of the successful competitors.

RESULT OF POST-CARD COMPETITION.—NO. 4.

THE guinea goes this week, for London, to Mrs. R. W. Bland, 29, Bridge Road, Hammersmith; and for the provinces to Mr. R. Lythgot, Broad Street, Bilston, S. Staffs. The letter turned upside down was "s," in the word *this*, line 50, col. 1.

POST-CARD COMPETITION.—No. 6.

IMPORTANT TO PROVINCIAL READERS.

A FEW words in this number have been purposely mis-spelt. A guinea is offered to the reader living within 100 miles of London who first points them out on the back of a post-card in the following order: Number of words (in large figures); the words themselves, with line, column, and page where each is found; name and address of sender. *Do not include cover or serial stories* in making your search. A guinea is also offered to readers living further than 100 miles from London.

Digitized by Google

Pauper Blue Blood.

BY WINIFRED GRAHAM.

Author of "When the Birds Begin to Sing," "Through the Valley," "Six First-class Passengers," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

GEORGINA PLUFF is a governess in the employ of the Ravenscrofts. Her charge is Eva, daughter of Sir Reginald and Lady Ravenscroft. Sefton, the only son, is engaged to Lady Norah Cannington, whose father, hearing on good authority of Sir Reginald's impending ruin, compels his daughter to write a letter to Sefton, saying that the engagement must be broken off. Before the financial crash arrives, Sir Reginald commits suicide in his own grounds, and Sefton's cup of bitterness is filled by the arrival of Lady Norah's letter. Georgina Pluff is aware of the late Sir Reginald's past, and threatens to expose his misdeeds unless she is married to Sefton. After the wedding Georgina visits her wealthy cousin, John Pluff, a retired grocer, and impresses him with her social position. Lady Norah receives a visit from a friend of Sefton, Douglas Shirling, who gives expression to his opinion concerning her treatment of Sefton. Georgina goes to stop with Pluff at Queen's Gate House. Lady Norah becomes engaged to the Duke of Malvern, but at the cost of her own happiness. Sefton's mother and sister go to stop at Ermyn Way, and he joins them, where he discovers, through Sarah Shirling, that his wife has advertised for a paying guest. He returns home to demand an explanation.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FASCINATING WIDOW.

"I SUPPOSE it's something disagreeable?" said Lady Ravenscroft.

"Yes, extremely disagreeable for *me*. What on earth induced you to put that infernal advertisement in the *Times*? How *dared* you, Georgina?"

"Dared, indeed! A pretty word to use to your wife. What was the harm, pray? And how did you discover it related to Ravenscroft Park?"

She spoke in short, sharp, hissing accents.

"Never mind. I know that you had the audacity to contemplate such a step without consulting me."

"Certainly, and I contemplate it still. What objection have you to raise? If you consider the addition of a guest, on stated terms, *infra dig*, give me sufficient money to live in the style that I require, and have grown accustomed to at my cousin's house. You can't do this—so the best plan is to hold your tongue, and let me earn a few paltry hundreds as best I can."

There was a long silence.

"I suppose it is utterly futile to instil into your brain how lowering and impossible this suggestion is. But of one thing be sure, if you harbour any such person under my roof, I will sell Ravenscroft Park, and the whole estate over our heads, and have you and your boarders out of it the very same day. This is no idle threat, for once I am in earnest. You have tried me too far."

He stood looking at her with those terrible eyes of cold disdain, his face white and his lips set.

"You are behaving like a tyrant and a brute," replied Georgina. "You want to cow and frighten me."

"Oh, no," and a gentle look came into his drawn face; "I only intend to stop you from further destroying my home. You would have brought disgrace on it once; I married you to save that. We Ravenscrofts would die, and have died in generations past at the stake, for our family honour! I sometimes think their fate was happier than the one you allotted me. I often envy those martyred ancestors."

"Oh, hang the ancestors!" muttered Georgina; "I'm talking about 'paying guests.' Your remonstrance is a little late; I have already interviewed one lady who is dying to come, and have yet to hear from the President of the Sportswoman's Club."

"You will wait a long time for *her* answer," cried Sefton, with a low, sarcastic laugh.

"What do you know of it?"

Georgina advanced a step and listened while he told her curtly the story of Sarah Shirling.

"It was beastly of her," muttered Lady Ravenscroft, using a word she knew that Sefton particularly disliked.

"That was the reason I returned at once," continued Sefton, "to put a check on your folly."

"Which is not the sort of check I am accustomed to," she retorted, drawing John Pluff's from her pocket, and holding it out for her husband's inspection.

"Your pay," he said sneeringly, "for consorting with snobs."

"Why have you returned in such a vile temper? One would think I had committed an atrocious crime. I suppose it's that impoverished blue blood again that is rebelling against practical money making. I'm sick of it, Sefton; it has stood in my light too long."

"Yet you cared enough for it to marry me. You demanded my paupered name as your price, though you knew that by so doing you would mar my life. It is long since we have had some plain speaking. You may feign contempt, and try to trample on my pride, but in reality you know that for all the money which has fallen to John Pluff's share, you would not have me barter my birthright."

"Don't make too sure! I have tasted the luxury of wealth at Queen's Gate House, and though I should be sorry to have married anyone but a *gentleman*, what is your vaunted blue blood, after all?"

Sir Sefton answered without a moment's hesitation.

"One of those precious possessions which no man, no power on earth can rob me of."

There was a long silence, in which Georgina sank on the sofa and bit her nails.

Sefton crossed to the window, and stood moodily looking out at the gradually clouding sky.

Digitized by Google

"I suppose I must write to Mrs. Rathbone by to-night's post. I did not mean *her* to come, at any rate."

"Have you quite decided to drop the idea?" asked Sefton coldly. "Or is Ravenscroft Park to be sold?"

He certainly looked as if he meant it. Georgina thought she had never seen a face so like a demon's.

Her own grew sinister and dark.

"The place only brings bad luck, and yet I don't want to let it go. If—if—we were ever rich, it would be hard to find its equal again."

"We are not likely to be, unless you are expecting a legacy from John Pluff, who will more than probably outlive us both. I should not imagine you or I will 'enjoy' long lives! Perpetual friction is not conducive to very boisterous health."

He moved wearily towards the door. Georgina spoke:

"It is not worth fighting about, and I would rather starve here than be shut away in some pokey little place where the Ravenscrofts might as well be Smiths or Jones. At least, we can keep up a certain appearance."

As Sefton vanished from her sight an agonised spasm passed over Georgina's face.

"Leave Ravenscroft," she muttered, "God! it would be like tearing Reginald from my heart. The red flowers I planted over the spot where he fell, are they blooming now, waving their heads, the colour of his blood?"

She stretched out her hands wildly and beat the air.

"Reginald, dear Reginald, I will stay by you always!"

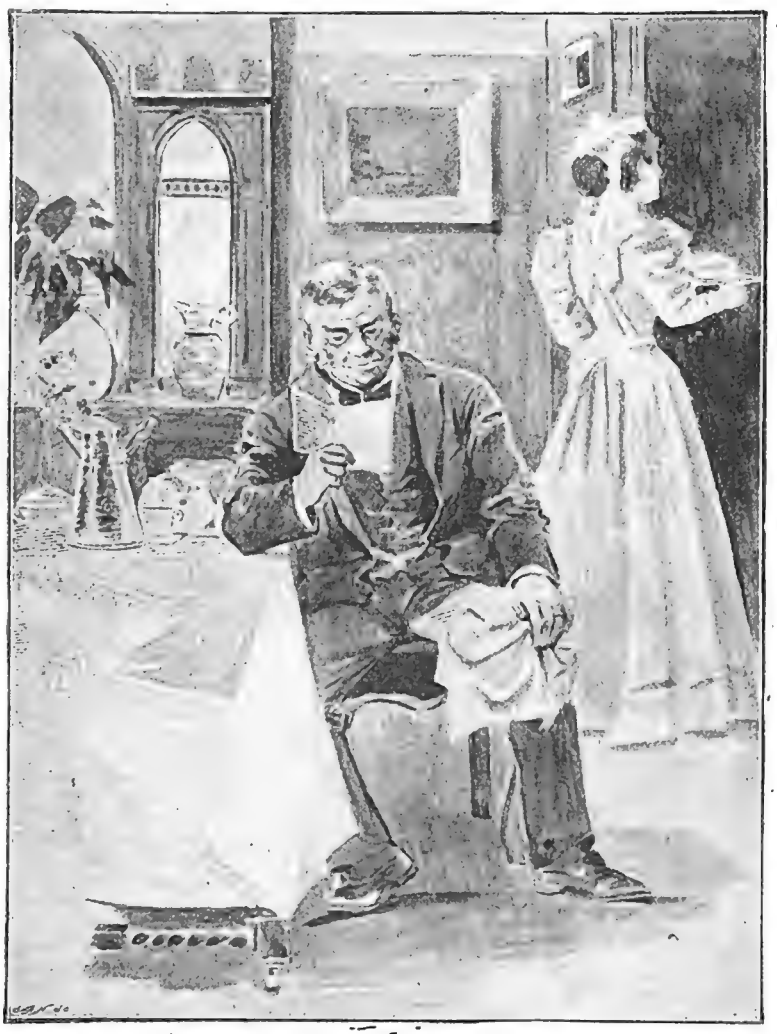
A strange contradiction, an erring mixture of love and hate, she paced her room battling with intense and varying passions.

It was nearly an hour later when she grew calm enough to write.

* * * * *

John Pluff was somewhat surprised a few mornings later to find a delicate note on his breakfast table, addressed in an unknown feminine hand. His heart beat high as he glanced at the signature: "Stella Rathbone."

It was a plaintive little letter, informing him that faithless Lady Ravenscroft had played her false, and would not let her go to Ravenscroft Park. It was a great blow, as she had considered the matter settled. It appeared so difficult to find an aristocratic family willing to accommodate her. Being a lonely widow she should be deeply grateful for Mr. Pluff's advice. Could he suggest anything, and would it be wise for her to advertise, if so, in what paper? She had lived so long abroad that she seemed quite to have lost touch with the old country since the decease of the Bottlemeads. Perhaps, if Mr. Pluff should happen to be driving in her direction that afternoon, he would look in for a chat at afternoon tea.



His heart beat high as he glanced at the signature.

"Nice woman, Mrs. Rathbone," he said, folding the scented paper and placing it in his waistcoat pocket. "Guess I'll find it convenient to drift in the direction of South Kensington this afternoon. She might like a turn in the Park. It is something to drive behind the best pair of chestnuts in London, and Mrs. Rathbone's stunning figure will draw attention to my turn-out, to say nothing of her hair. Poor Georgina! Those beautiful coils fairly upset her. But I need not tell her I've kept up with Mrs. R——. Ladies are so jealous of one another!"

He found the widow adorned for the occasion in a most fascinating costume of palest mauve. She clapped her hands playfully when he suggested a drive, and flew for a handful of violets she called a bonnet.

"This is so far nicer than my little hired Victoria," she vouchsafed as they rolled away.

"I'm happy to hear you say so," murmured Mr. Pluff, "and it's a treat to be seen alongside of *you*, Mrs. Rathbone," with a would-be attractive leer.

He kept his eyes well on the alert for friends or acquaintances. He wished to show the widow that he was a well-known figure in the Park, at the same time noticing that she bowed to no one.

Mrs. Humphery passed and smiled effusively, then to his joy he espied the Pynes seated *en famille* under the trees. The "dear boys" were staring vacantly before them, Nesta was talking to the young man from Gibraltar, while "Mr.

and Mrs. P." rose and hastened to the rails to get a word with Mr. Pluff.

"*Have* you heard the news?" exclaimed Nesta's doting mother, waving her sunshade in the direction of the young couple. "Our dear daughter is to be married this autumn from our country house, 'Livonia.' I *hope* you will come and stay with us for the festivities."

Mr. Pluff replied brusquely he should be abroad, and pretended not to see Miss Pyne bowing somewhat shyly.

He felt relieved when the carriage moved on, and he could once more seek consolation in his close proximity to

"HAVE *you heard the news?*" *exclaimed Nesta's doting mother.*

the violet bonnet and heliotrope drapery of Mrs. Rathbone's chiffons.

"I think, after all," sighed the widow contentedly, "I shall not bother about leaving town just yet. It seems a pity at the height of the season, though one can be as lonely in a crowd as anywhere. An afternoon such as this, in congenial society, tempts me to linger among the butterflies of fashion. You know, Mr. Pluff, I am a very simple little woman, and easily satisfied. I do not pant for wild excitement. Just a turn with you in the fresh air, a sight of pretty faces and gay attire, is enough to make my heart light, to set my pulses beating."

Her sweet, innocent words amazed Mr. Pluff.

"Well, then, you are very different to the run of people Mrs. R."

He invariably substituted the initial for the name. It was a sign of friendship and familiarity. Already John Pluff felt on excellent terms with his red-haired divinity.

She unfolded for his benefit some thrilling stories of her past, tales of adventure that occurred while she was travelling with the "dear General" through countless foreign lands.

What with shipwrecks, scenes of fire, burglaries, and battles, Mr. Pluff's hair stood on end.

"And yet," she murmured in conclusion, "I am the most domesticated, home-loving creature imaginable. That is my present sorrow—I have no home!"

Her eyes grew moistly pathetic, she really *was* thinking of the General.

"Poor dear!—poor soul!" muttered Mr. Pluff, gulping back his emotion. "It's hard to be left, and 'im such a gallant man, such a noble warrior!"

"But not so hard now that I have found a sympathetic friend," said Mrs. Rathbone, smiling through her tears—becoming dewdrops, since she had shown her wisdom by retaining them in the meshes of her eyelashes, not allowing them to fall and make rivulets through her *poudre d'amour*.

"She brings out all that is chivalrous in a man," thought John Pluff, marvelling at the tiny dimensions of Mrs. Rathbone's waist. "Nothin' advanced about her, by George! Just tender, womanly instincts, blended with almost unnatural courage."

As this mental verdict passed through his mind, Mrs. Rathbone gave a sharp scream and clutched his arm. A horse beside them had shied and struck against the carriage.

Reassured that no harm was done to herself or the animal, she laughed softly, and relaxed her grip of Mr. Pluff's coat sleeve.

"I was not very frightened, but a great number of vehicles always unnerve me."

When they parted, Mr. Pluff arranged when to call on the following day, and asked her if she were fond of French chocolates.

Mrs. Rathbone replied that "she could live on them."

John Pluff ordered a floral basket of exquisite bon-bons on his way home, to be sent immediately to her hotel, and stopped at a photographer's to arrange an hour for a sitting on the following day.

"And remember," he said to the man, "it's for a *lady* so don't you leave any pimples or nothink on the surface!"

That same evening Mrs. Humphery wrote a long effusion to Lady Ravenscroft, the point of which she reserved for her postscript: "By-the-way I forgot to tell you I saw Mr. Pluff to-day, driving in the Park with a most eccentric looking person. Can you imagine who she is? Wears a bright red wig to be seen a mile off, has rather fine eyes, and a figure that makes you positively ache to think of. They were talking animatedly, and your cousin appeared radiant."

The penning of these lines gave Mrs. Humphery infinite satisfaction.

She hoped she had scented a scandal, and was burning with curiosity to learn the name of "that Jezebel in mauve!"

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EXPLANATION.

MRS. HUMPHERY'S letter, with its alarming intelligence concerning John Pluff, so thoroughly upset Georgina that she was obliged to take to her bed.

The news had utterly prostrated her. She lay planning

Digitized by Google

John Pluff ordered a floral basket of exquisite bon-bons.

schemes for his rescue from the widow's clutches, occasionally dropping into a feverish sleep only to indulge terrible dreams of her cousin's courtship and marriage with Mrs. Rathbone.

But the chief sting lay in the thought that she, Georgina, had introduced them.

When her failing strength returned sufficiently to write, she penned two lengthy epistles, one to John Pluff and another to her new friend, Mrs. Humphery.

She thanked the latter sincerely for her "hint" about the lady with the red wig, and begged Mrs. Humphery to further acquaint her should she see that obtrusive person again in her cousin's society. "Dear John," she said, "is so easily led and has no one to watch over him but me. I fear he is getting entangled with a woman of doubtful character, and he is too precious a jewel to be wasted on one so utterly unworthy. She would only make his declining days a burden to him, and probably hasten his end by her neglect and frivolity."

The subject of the awful fate awaiting John Pluff, should he marry Mrs. Rathbone, opened a wide field for Georgina's imagination. She continued to describe her overwhelming feelings in forcible language, then congratulating herself on having written a wonderfully dramatic and touching letter; she addressed it to Mrs. Humphery, who she guessed would be no means loth to act as moral policeman in regard to this trying affair.

Like many of her sisters she loved a finger in other people's pies.

Then Georgina carefully worded a diplomatic appeal, begging cousin John to come and make a long stay at Ravenscroft Park.

"I feel I need your companionship," she wrote. "I am in the lowest spirits and the worst of health. A sight of your ever bright face, a spell of your effervescing and delightful society, will do me all the good in the world. The country is looking more beautiful than ever, and there are some especially attractive drives I have planned we shall take together, or should I be unable through failing strength to get about, Sefton will do his very best to entertain you. When we parted I thought you looked pale and in need of a change. London is stuffy, hot, and depressing. Come to Ravenscroft Park where flowers are blooming and breezes blowing. Here you will grow young again.—Yours (longing to be re-united),

GEORGY."

It was the first time she had ever signed herself in a more familiar manner than Georgina Ravenscroft.

"The short name will please him," she murmured, folding the sheet.

Her stratagem however was destined to fail.

John answered by return that he was far too well employed in town to bother about breezes and blossoms just yet. He was sorry to hear she was ill, and would be glad to pay the expenses of a first-rate London doctor, if she cared to have one down.

Georgina gnashed her teeth, but replied she should be thankful to accept his offer, and would wire at once to Dr. Playford, whose fee was a hundred guineas.

Needless to say the money never reached the doctor, but as John Pluff didn't know, Georgina argued, her deception mattered not.

Sefton's spirits still flagged, perhaps because the news of Lady Norah's approaching wedding greeted him at every turn.

The papers were full of it, and the preparations commented on everywhere. Her picture, beside the Duke of Malvern, appeared in all the ladies' journals, which (either from spite or carelessness) Georgina left about for her husband to see. He read descriptions of Norah's beauty, comments on her daily life, anecdotes of her childhood, and articles upon her attire. He seemed saturated with the details, and as the fateful day grew nearer, her image haunted him unceasingly. He was torn with jealousy, distracted by the recollection of the love she had once bestowed on him, craving for past hours, while cursing those false kisses.

He grudged the brilliant future in store for her. She would sail gaily through life, with those laughing eyes and scornful lips, while he lay writhing on the shores of despair, too maimed and wounded to reach the glistening sea where her craft had drifted. He could only watch it from the distance, she happily resting on calm waters, while the quicksands of poverty sucked him down.

Congratulating herself.

Digitized by Google

Would she think to glance back as she basked in the sunny rays?

Perhaps, to pass an idle hour the Duchess of Malvern might pick her way carefully over the stony beach of time, and feel the last clutch of a convulsive hand, as his lost soul sank lower—lower—into the realms of death and darkness.

Wildly he yearned for one final sight of Norah Cannington before she changed her name. To hold her hand again, though it had dealt him so hard a blow, led him to a precipice, and then pushed his weak, frail spirit over the edge. His sensibilities were numbed. He had no anxiety for Georgina, though now that she was ill he would inquire after her from the nurse (who had come from London), and occasionally take flowers to her room.

He gathered a handful of red blossoms mechanically from the shrubbery, and carried them to her bedside.

She looked at the offering with horrified eyes as he laid it beside her.

"No, no; take those flowers away," she pleaded. "I can't bear to see them, and their sickly smell is like death."

She shuddered, hiding her face on the pillow.

Sefton picked up the nosegay and turned to the door, when a low cry recalled him. Georgina had raised herself on one elbow, and was holding out a thin hand eagerly.

"Bring them back," she murmured, pointing to the flowers.

He gave them to her in some surprise, watching her weak fingers close tenderly round their green stalks, while she pressed the petals to her lips.

"Bring them back," she murmured.

Then closing her eyes, she lay passively, holding the drooping bouquet to her heart, a smile upon her lips.

Sefton roamed about the garden restlessly. He felt as if a long walk would calm his thoughts and do him good.

He crossed the park, and went out into the country roads. On, on he strode, his feet unconsciously taking him in the direction of Rosemont.

He skirted Lord Cannington's woods, looking neither to the right nor to the left, till he woke, as it seemed, from a somnambulistic ramble, with a rude shock, to find himself facing the tall familiar iron gates.

He stared at them blankly a moment, before hurrying on. He had never passed through the Rosemont portals since Lady Norah wrote that fatal letter.

A step behind, a little hand pressed on his arm—a voice that thrilled the very fibres of his being—and oh! heavens—did his eyes deceive him?—Norah gazing into his face with parted lips, and tears upon her cheek!

He stood dazed and breathless, staring in mute wonder at the bewitching beauty of the woman he loved.

"Sefton," she whispered reproachfully, "you passed me without a word—a look!"

He glanced round, and saw that she was alone. Then, just as in old days, he clasped the little hand in both his, and pressed it to his lips. But even as he did so, he remembered the gulf between them, the bridge of her own making, and let the hand fall with a smothered groan.

The action had sent the blood into Norah's pale cheeks, her heart beat fearfully, she swayed as if she would fall.

The intervening space of time seemed to roll away. Surely they must be the same Norah, the same Sefton, that stood by the lake, watching their reflections in the water.

What of the governess in dull yellow, who dragged her skirt like a serpent's trail across the grass? What of Lady Ravenscroft? The remembrance of her brought Norah sharply to her senses. The pangs of jealousy revived.

"What is the matter?" she asked. "Why do you look so sad?"

"A needless question from your lips," he replied, still hungrily devouring her with his eyes.

"I don't see that," with a wistful puckering of her brow. "I am nothing to you now, you have your wife——"

The sudden change that rushed over Sefton's features withered Lady Norah's sentence.

"My *wife!*"

The words were muttered between his teeth, with a short laugh that was not pleasant to hear.

"Yes, you were not faithful long to the memory of our love!"

The rebuke was wrung from the girl against her will; she spoke almost involuntarily.

"You say *our* love. You played at caring for me till you tired of the game, and now you call your jest by that sacred name. Ah! Norah. Be true at least to yourself if you could not be loyal to me. You have made my life what it is—slain the good and left the wormwood—but, at least, spare me your mock reproaches."

Lady Norah breathed hard. The crimson died from her cheeks, the tears started afresh to her eyes.

"I ask one question only," she gasped. "If you had known that I still loved you, if you had known I loved you all along, would you have married Georgina Pluff?"

Swiftly the governess's terms and the threats they were to silence, passed through Sefton's mind. The family honour! What was it compared to Norah's love? His answer vibrated on the still air: "God knows I would sooner have died!"

A look of infinite relief stole over the girl's youthful face, the beauty of which even mental care could not mar.

"You have said enough. Now listen to my justification, for I *must* speak. You thought me false, fickle to the core, and small wonder. How could you tell that my heart was

Digitized by Google

breaking, yearning for the love my father forced me to resign? I had not the strength to stand against him. I was weak and yielded under protest, not realising that when I wrote my final letter to you I was signing my own death warrant—the end of all my hope, my joy my life. Can't you pity me, Sefton, such a poor unstable creature, without nerve enough to fight either for myself or you? And then while I waited with faint fluttering hope, believing vaguely that in time it would 'come all right,' resolving to marry no one, and firmly convinced that while I was single, *you* would remain so too. A rumour of the new Lady Ravenscroft came like a thunderbolt. I had heard nothing of the wedding. Some people say you were married in a registry office. All I cared for and knew was that I must thrust you out of my heart for ever. But to separate you and your resting place was impossible. In my endeavour so to do I lost both. You went together and left me heartless—loveless—desolate!"

The words rose like a wail. She clasped her hands frantically.

"How can I believe this when you are to be married next week?"

"Oh, yes," shaking her head sadly. "I lay that at your door as well. Do you think it was nothing to me, the sight of your wife's triumphant eyes, when I passed her in the road with Victor, before our engagement. The look she gave me spurred me on, the thought that you had forgotten the past goaded me to accept him. Then there were my father's comments: 'Sefton did not care—*he* has not mourned you long!' They all told—each was a fresh grain, that grew and developed, planted on the waste ground that had once been my heart.

"Take care what you're saying, Norah. Is that true?"

He was close beside her, bending over the drooping head.

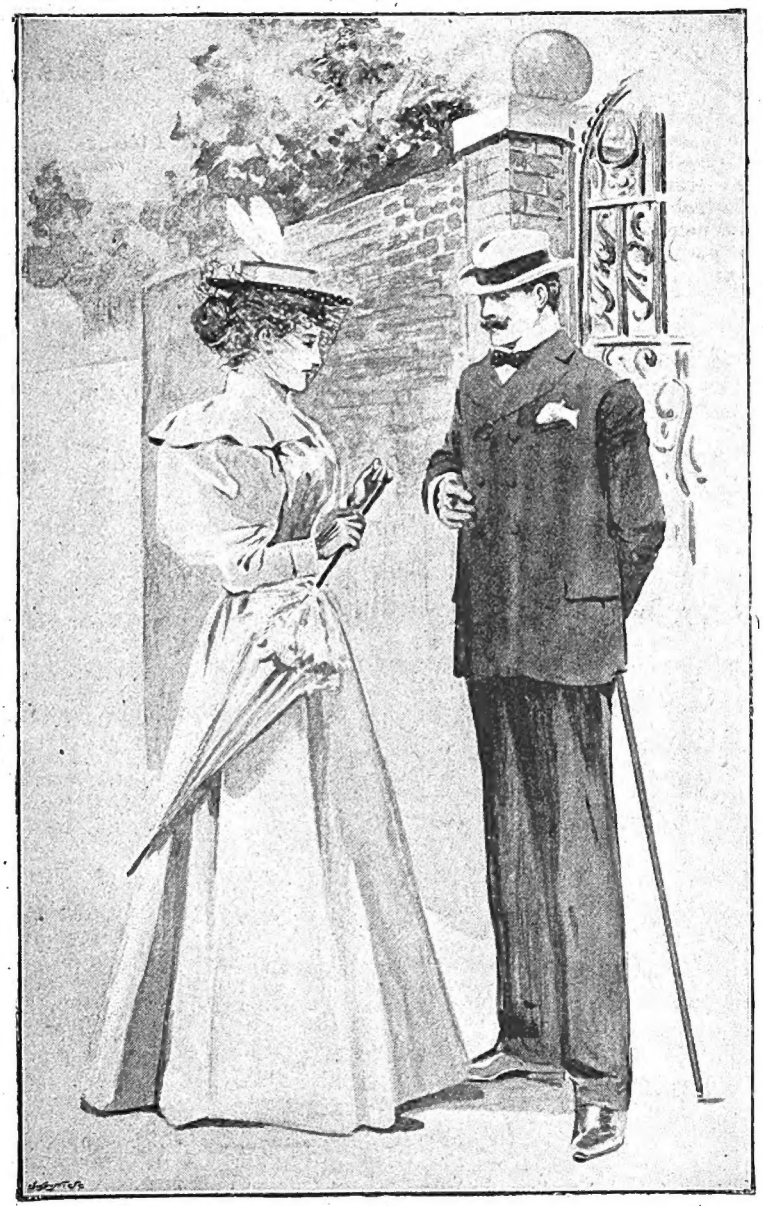
"Yes, on my word of honour, I swear it."

"Yet still you *are* going to marry the Duke?"

"No," she replied. "I am *not!*"

So little had he expected this answer that words failed him. He only waited in silent surprise for her to continue.

"I have been weak and yielding long enough, at last I will be strong. You cannot comprehend what this resolve will cost me—I do not wish you to; but when you hear that the marriage between Lady Norah Cannington and the Duke of Malvern has been suddenly broken off within a week of the ceremony, then you can say: 'It was for the sake of our old love. Norah did that to clear herself in my eyes.'"



"How can I believe this when you are to be married next week."

"No, no. I would not have you sacrifice yourself for me. You cannot live on the ashes of a dead passion. You will faint and starve existing on remembrance."

"My passion will not be dead," said Norah softly; "only hidden in my soul. After to-day, Sefton, we must never meet; but the recollection of this hour will salve the pain. To marry Victor now would be grossest sin. I did not know how strong and lasting love could be. Your presence has saved me just in time. Once, years ago, with childish curiosity, I asked an old French governess to inquire of 'Planchette' whom I should marry. The answer came, written in large letters across the page: '*Elle est virginale!*'"

"Life is stranger than fiction," murmured Sefton. "To think that this chance meeting has altered the whole of your future."

"And yet to-day I am happier than I have been for a single hour since that terrible night."

"Then you never loved the Duke of Malvern?"

"No."

"God bless you, Norah, and thank Heaven for your deliverance! No torments of the accursed can be worse than the fate that befalls a man or woman walking with open eyes into loveless matrimony."

(*To be continued.*)

Digitized by Google

THE CYPHER.

During my sojourn in Dijon, I was on intimate terms with an eccentric individual named Eustache Loriot, a man of some forty years of age, fresh, ruddy, fair complexioned, rather stout, of medium height, a large head, with forehead unduly prominent, Socratic nose, and china-blue eyes.

He was deputy judge of the tribunal, but his duties leaving him considerable leisure, and being possessed of an independent fortune, he had early abandoned himself to a passion for *bric-à-brac*. His collection comprised a little of everything—rare books, medals, old china.

Although married, Eustache Loriot was childless. His wife was a pretty brunette of twenty-eight years, well made, lively, with a pair of dangerous dark eyes, and a light down on the upper lip.

Elegant, pleasure-loving, she found life extremely dull in the silent house in the Quartier des Grangettes, where her husband accumulated his treasure, and where no visitors were received excepting a few old antiquarians and a young lawyer, a friend of Loriot's, and, like him, an amateur in rare books. This celebrated advocate, Frederick Simonnet by name, was no more than thirty years of age, and passed for the head of the Dijon Bar.

He often came to borrow from Loriot's library, and the evening on which I had the pleasure of making his acquaintance, he had just brought back a fine copy of "Daphnis and Chloe," bound in red morocco.

"See," said Loriot proudly, handing the book to me, "here is a rare book that came from the library of M. des Armoises, a gentleman of Lorraine, who was imprisoned during the Terror, condemned to death, and whose mistress aided him to escape on the morning of the day fixed for his execution. I secured this book for almost nothing at the sale of the effects of the daughter of the very woman who saved Des Armoises."

I took the book and while turning the leaves, remarked a singular circumstance. Here and there, from page to page, whole lines were underscored with minute dots or hyphens, some in red ink, others in yellow ink, and having the appearance of age.

"Ah, this is curious," I murmured; "have you noticed this peculiarity in your copy?" I asked of Loriot, showing him the marked pages. At the same time, I raised my head and was struck by the uneasy, troubled expression of the lawyer's countenance. I turned towards Mme. Loriot and was astonished to see her pretty face reflect, as in a mirror, the confusion in Frederic Simonnet's.

"I attached no importance to it," responded the lawyer, reddening slightly.

"No importance?" cried Loriot, firing up; "for my part, I think there is an historical enigma there, a mysterious language to which I shall discover the key—you shall see, you shall see!"

Some eight days after I met Loriot, and, with characteristic impetuosity he seized me by the arm.

"My friend," he said. "I am on the track, and before long I shall discover the key! Here is what I have found so far" (at the same time drawing the copy of "Daphnis and Chloe" from his pocket). "In the first place," he continued, in opening the volume, "notice that the dots are always in yellow ink and the hyphens always in red ink. They seem to answer each other. Now, it is evident to me that Des Armoises kept this book in his prison, and his mistress visiting him there, sometimes took away, and sometimes returned the volume, so that with the aid of a cypher the two lovers used it as a means of correspondence. Ha! is not that an ingenious explanation? Only I have not yet discovered the key to the cypher, but with patience, I shall find it!"

"Will you lend me the book for a couple of days," I responded; "I have studied cypher language a little, and might be able to help you."

He consented, and I took the book home with me. It did not require any long study to discover the key, for the cypher used by the two correspondents was of the simplest. They had made use of the characters in the text, retaining their ordinary value, and it sufficed to place the marked letters side by side to reconstruct the sentences.

The first I deciphered was this:

"He goes to the tribunal to-morrow at two o'clock. Come, we shall not be disturbed"

To which the hyphens in red ink responded:

"It is understood, darling. At two o'clock. A thousand kisses."

I was highly edified, and if my hypothesis did not exactly coincide with Loriot's it was none the less most interesting.

The next day I called at the judge's at an hour when I felt certain of meeting his wife. I found her alone, before a blazing fire, and Eustache Loriot was at work in his library.

"I have discovered," I said in a low voice to Madame Loriot, "the key to the famous cypher correspondence."

"Ah," she murmured, glancing sharply at me, "let me see this book!"

I handed it to her, and immediately with a rapid movement she threw it into the fire.

And while I, stupefied, watched "Daphnis and Chloe" smoulder, she stirred the fire with the tongs.

When the hapless book was reduced to an incandescent mass, she gave a cry:

"Ah, *mon Dieu*, what a misfortune! What will Eustache say?"

At this exclamation Loriot came running out.

"What has happened?"

"Such a misfortune, my dear. Monsieur inadvertently placed the 'Daphnis and Chloe' on the arm of my chair and I must have made a false movement, and the volume fell into the grate. As we were conversing with our backs to the fire, we did not perceive it until too late."

Eustache seized the tongs in consternation, pulled out the burning book, and rushed to plunge it into a basin of water. But it was of no use. When taken out of its bath, nothing remained of "Daphnis and Chloe" but a heap of charred cinders.

"What a disaster!" lamented Loriot; "it is not so much a rare book that I regret, but there are the documentary materials that the fire has devoured—I repeat it, there was an enigma there of the highest interest—and just as I was about to discover the key!"

PIERROT.

POSTAL RATES.

SHORT STORIES will be sent direct from these offices, post free, to any country within the Postal Union, at the following rates, prepaid:

One Year	6s. 6d.
Half Year	3s. 3d.
Three Months	1s. 8d.

Printed and Published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., at "Pearson's Weekly" Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

SUMMER HEAT AND OBESITY.

"Summer heat, with the out-door enjoyments which come in its train, is a source of unmixed delight to all whose physical condition is sound. The full feast of pleasure to which hospitable Nature at this season invites mankind is not, however, for those whose infirmities forbid them to undergo, without serious discomfort, a considerable amount of bodily fatigue. To those in particular who are the victims of excessive corpulence, the arrival of the genial summer warmth serves chiefly as a painful reminder that, for them, the delights of long woodland rambles, the climbing of mountain tops, and all the adventurous ways of flood and field are prohibited joys. The palpitating heart, the reeling brain, and the possible deadly sunstroke, which are the concomitants of obesity, banish all the pleasant anticipations which once came with the advent of the glad summer tide. How much of this deprivation of enjoyment and positive misery is absolutely and easily avoidable may be learned by consulting Mr. F. Cecil Russell's 'Corpulency, and the Cure' (256 pages), a little work whose popularity is proved by the fact that its eighteenth edition has just been issued. This fact, too, indicates, in some degree, the wide area now covered by Mr. Russell's wonderful success as an expert in the reduction of excessive fat. His process, which is absolutely safe and pleasant, is so rapid in its operation, that any over-corpulent lady or gentlemen can easily get rid of all unnecessary weight in a very few weeks, so as to be able, before the autumn is with us, to enjoy the delightful feeling (and the appearance too) of renewed youth and energy. Mr. Russell makes no mystery of the nature of his curative preparation—apparently miraculous as are its effects in simultaneously reducing weight and increasing appetite—the consequently larger amount of food being consumed with impunity. He prints, therefore, his recipe in his singularly suggestive book, which may be obtained post free, by sending two penny stamps to his offices, Woburn House, 27, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C."—*Gloucester Standard.*

EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS

IN THE

TREATMENT OF OBESITY.

"Our corpulent readers will be glad to learn how to positively lose two stone in about a month with the greatest possible benefit in health, strength and muscle by a comparatively new system. It is a singular paradox that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state, with increased activity of brain, digestive and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto, yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight 1lb. or 2lb. daily, as the weighing-machine will prove. Thus there is no suggestion of starvation. It is an absolute success, and the author, who has devoted years of study to the subject, absolutely guarantees a noticeable reduction within twenty-four hours of commencing the treatment. This is different with other diseases, for the patient in some cases may go for weeks without being able to test whether the Physician has rightly treated him, and may have derived no real or apparent improvement in health. Here, we repeat, the author guarantees it in twenty-four hours, the scale to be the unerring judge. The treatment aims at the actual root of the disease, so that the superfluous fat does not return when discontinuing the treatment. It is perfectly harmless. We advise our readers to call the attention of stout friends to this, because, sincerely, we think they ought to know. For this information, we may say that on sending two penny stamps a book 'Corpulency, and the Cure' (256 pages), containing a reprint of press notices from some hundreds of Medical and other journals (British and Foreign), and other interesting particulars, including the 'recipe,' can be had from a Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C."—Extract from *The Belfast News Letter.*

Digitized by Google

DEAFNESS

And Head Noises Relieved by Using **Wilson's Common-Sense Ear Drums.** A new scientific invention, entirely different in construction from all other devices. Assist the deaf when all other devices fail, and where medical skill has given no relief. They are safe, comfortable, and invisible; have no wire or string attachment. Write for Pamphlet. Mention this Paper.

Wilson Ear Drum Co. Agent: **D. H. WILSON,**

Drum in position, **7, Newington Road, Edinburgh.**

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S NERVINE

Prevents Decay. Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented. Neuralgic Headache and all Nerve Pains Removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

7/6 SALOON GUN WITH 100 BALL CARTRIDGES. 7/6

TAKES BALL, SHOT, AND NOISELESS CARTRIDGES.

This gun is the cheapest in the world. It is not a toy, but a practical well-made **Saloon Gun,** 37in. long, weight about 4½lb. **100 Birds or Rabbits** can be killed with it at cost of **1/6** only with shot cartridges, or **6/-** per 500. Will penetrate a deal board 1in. at 50 yards. Can also be used in the house as a **Target Rifle,** with NOISELESS Cartridges at **1/-** per 100, or **5/-** per 1,000. This gun is fitted with a beautifully finished stock, nickel-plated fittings, etc., etc. **Price 7/6 with 100 Ball Cartridges.** Each gun is tested, regulated, and proved before sent to customer. **The "Union Jack" Pistol** (Registered), with 100 Ball Cartridges, price **4/6,** or pair for **8/-. Block Action Saloon or Garden Guns** (very superior manufacture) with 100 ball cartridges. No. 1 Bore, **12/6**; No. 2 Bore, **13/6**; No. 3 Bore, **15/6.** No. 3 Bore at 15/6 will kill a bird on the wing at 35 to 45 yards. Send for Price Lists of Air Guns, Saloon Guns, sporting novelties and ammunition. If you cannot send to-day, cut this advertisement out, and write some other time. ADDRESS—**W. R. JACKSON,** Wholesale Arms and Ammunition Dealer, **Tottenham, MIDDLESEX.**

(Mention this Paper.)

"JUNO" CYCLES Are the Very Best.

JUNO Safeties. Roadsters, 28lb.; Racers, 22lb.

JUNO Lady's Safety a Specialite.

Send at once for JUNO Catalogue, sent post free to any part of the world, interesting and valuable to all. METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS' CO., LTD., 75 and 76, Bishopsgate Without, London, E.C.

N.B.—Every JUNO Guaranteed. MENTION PAPER.

BLUSHING.

Particulars of a self-treatment for a permanent cure, as prescribed by eminent physicians of the U.S.A., forwarded free to all sufferers on receipt of stamped addressed envelope to Dr. B. F. FIELD, 15, York Buildings, Charing Cross, London, W.

HAIR DESTROYED permanently and absolutely by an entirely new and harmless self-treatment, total destruction guaranteed. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. Prof. F.T. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London

CORPULENCY CURED By a simple inexpensive self-treatment, effecting a rapid and permanent reduction without change in diet. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope to Dr. G. A. BOYD, 14, York Buildings, Charing Cross, London.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs. "T. D.," 87, Strand, London.

DR. WARNER'S CORALINE CORSETS

DR. WARNER'S CORALINE CORSETS

DR. WARNER'S CORALINE CORSETS

DR. WARNER'S CORALINE CORSETS

A lady in Truro writes: 'I have never had corsets to last me so long as these.' A lady in Camberwell writes: 'I have worn a pair of Coraline Corsets for over three years, and never wish for better.' A lady near Leicester writes: 'I cannot speak too highly of your Corsets. I consider they are unequalled for wear and comfort.' We could fill columns with similar letters all unsolicited. We will readily give names and addresses if asked for.

DR. WARNER'S CORALINE CORSETS

DR. WARNER'S CORALINE CORSETS

DR. WARNER'S CORALINE CORSETS

DR. WARNER'S CORALINE CORSETS

No need to send to us if you can obtain the Coraline Corsets from your draper, but if you cannot, we will send you, post free, illustrated Catalogue and Price List of the various shapes and styles and tell you how to obtain the goods. Twenty million pairs already sold. In any case do not be persuaded to try any substitute. Coraline is also obtainable for use in Dresses. Address W. Pretty and Son, Ipswich. A post-card will do. Prices from 4s. 6d.

DR. WARNER'S CORALINE CORSETS

DR. WARNER'S CORALINE CORSETS

DR. WARNER'S CORALINE CORSETS

DR. WARNER'S CORALINE CORSETS

HIGH-CLASS CYCLES.

Ladies' and Gents'. Low Prices. Best Materials. Finest Workmanship. Satisfaction Assured. Sent on Approval. Write for Lists.

J. LOFTUS, 58, Great George St., Liverpool.

TO TOBACCONISTS COMMENCING.

£20 See Illus. Guide and Catalogue (250 pages), 3d. "How to Open a Cigar Stores, from £20 to £2,000." TOBACCONISTS' OUTFITTING CO., 188, Euston Road, London. (Over 50 years' reputation.) Manager, H. MYERS.

ARMSTRONG'S Lady's & Gentleman's, from £5 10s., carriage paid. Prompt delivery, lists free. SPORTING GUN DEPT., **Collingwood Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.**

Send 4 Stamps and receive pair **FOLDING SCISSORS, PATENT PENKNIFE,** and Amusing Novelty Catalogue, post paid. VARIETY COMPANY, UALSTON, LONDON.

ATLAS LOCKSTITCH MACHINE.

Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality and size to any machine. To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5 P.O. for **ONE MONTH'S TRIAL.** Balance can be paid **5/- Monthly.** Call or write for designs and Samples of work.

39/-

THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO., 188B, High St., Camden Town, London, N.W.; 63, Seven Sisters Rd., N.; 14, High Rd., Kilburn.

NEW HARRISON Swift Gold Medal KNITTER.

KNITS Stockings ribbed or plain, Gloves and Clothing in Wool, Silk, or Cotton. Instructions Free. Lists free per post. 25 Triumphant Awards, including 7 Gold Medals, for the "Harrison" and "Sun" Machines.

Harrison Knitting Machine Co., Ltd. Works: 48, Upper Brook St., Manchester.

DOUGLAS, HUNGERFORD, AND WILLIAMS.

PROFITS PAID DURING 1895.

Jan. 2, £8 per cent., Feb. 1, £6, Mar. 1, £5, April 1, £8, May 1, £7, June 2, £10, July 1, £9, Aug. 1, £9, Sept. 2, £8, Oct. 1, £8, Nov. 1, £7, Dec. 2, £7.

Total for 12 months £92 per cent., an average of nearly £8 PER CENT. PER MONTH.

PROFITS PAID DURING 1896.

Jan. 2, £6 per cent., Feb. 1, £7, Mar. 2, £8, April 1, £6, May 1, £6, June 1, £5, July 1, £5.

OUR NEW ILLUSTRATED MANUAL mailed free upon request, showing how these profits may be made WITHOUT SPECULATION. Cheques for profits mailed promptly 1st of each month, and for withdrawals of capital on 2nd and 16th of each month. Trial investments of £5 and upwards may be made.

We have not a dissatisfied Client.

DOUGLAS, HUNGERFORD, & WILLIAMS, 5, Copthall Avenue, London, E.C., and 11, Place de la Bourse, Paris.

A LOVELY FIGURE

with **full natural perfect Bust,** obtained by a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment, approved and recommended by the medical profession. Success guaranteed. For particulars free, send stamped envelope in confidence to Madame "B. J.," Oriental Toilet Co., 87, Strand, London.

TOO STOUT

If you require a reliable remedy for the relief of superfluous fat, send for a box of my **"H.D."** Pills. No starvation required; you may eat and drink what you like, yet I guarantee to either sex a permanent reduction of 5lb. to 7lb. weekly. They are a harmless vegetable preparation; successful in the most stubborn cases, and improve health and figure. Their action is rapid, certain, safe, tasteless, and highly recommended. Prices, 2s. 9d., 4s. 6d., and 11s., post free, plain wrapper. PROFESSOR F. T. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

HAIR DESTROYED. On receipt of stamped addressed envelope a lady will send to those afflicted with Superfluous Hairs, free particulars of a simple remedy which permanently removed a large growth from her sister's face without injuring the skin. Address, in confidence, Miss E. R. DALE, 26, Belvedere Road, Lambeth, London.

CAMDEN HIGHEST GRADE & AJAX CYCLES FOR LADIES & GENTLEMEN

ARE RICH VALUE. 25 to 30 per cent. saved and carriage paid.

IMMENSE STOCK, NEW AND SECOND HAND.

Easy Terms from 10s. per Month. Lists free.

Now Open.—LARGE CYCLING SCHOOLS.

BRITISH CYCLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY, 42, High Street, Camden Town, London, N.W.